

BRIEF

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run Tele-Liban has been on a satellite channel since Friday. Mr. Najib has raised the price of the channel to \$35 million and is expected to start selling it to other countries. The channel is expected to start selling to other countries. The channel is expected to start selling to other countries.

rebels in east

ops killed 15 Kurds in the eastern province of Iraq. "At least 15 Kurds were found dead and 15 others were injured," said a source. "We think it was a deliberate attack."

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Department of Foreign Affairs said that it has sent an envoy to Israel. The envoy is expected to meet with Israeli officials. The envoy is expected to meet with Israeli officials.

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Home News

Apprehension surfaces among businessmen trading with Iraq

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordanian businessmen are raising concern that a possible deterioration in relations between Amman and Baghdad could seriously undermine trade and economic ties and lead to the loss of what is left of the Iraqi market for Jordanian industries.

In public and private comments, they say that the Baghdad government, which effectively controls the Iraqi economy and market through state-run enterprises, could call off trade deals with Jordanian exporters in retaliation for the Kingdom offering refuge in a top-ranking Iraqi official and son-in-law of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

"It was after more than three years that we managed to rebuild business ties with Iraq, which was steadily drifting towards the West as well as the Far East for its needs in the absence of a steady lack of serious Jordanian interest in trade," said a businessman, who claimed he had a standing order worth JD 500,000 a month for food stuffs to Iraq.

According to Department of Statistics figures quoted by the Central Bank of Jordan (CBB) in its latest monthly bulletin, Jordanian exports to Iraq — food and medicine are exempt from the international sanctions against that country — were worth JD 106 million in 1994.

The trend, as reflected in figures for the first half of this year, was upward, with an average of JD 12 million in Jordanian exports to its eastern neighbour.

In return, Iraqi exports to Jordan — crude oil and fuel oil, also exempt from the sanctions — averaged about JD 25 million a month. In 1994, Iraqi oil exports to Jordan were worth JD 291.34 million.

Prior to the Gulf crisis triggered by the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait — which brought about the sweeping international sanctions on Iraq — annual Jordanian exports to Iraq were worth more than JD 300 million, including re-exports by Jordanian firms.

As such, the crisis itself was a serious blow to Jordanian industries, many of whom depended solely on the Iraqi market for their products.

A few of them were forced out of business as a result of the suspension of those products to Iraq in line with the sanctions, while others have been trying to diversify their marketing to other countries.

Some have been largely successful in finding alternative markets, while others are still struggling to survive in a highly competitive market.

Re-exports from Jordan to Iraq have largely come to an end by now, given that many Jordanian foodstuff firms and pharmaceuticals have entered the scene to offer substitutes which cash-strapped Iraq could afford.

Council to start development of north, south areas of Aqaba — minister

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The meeting in Aqaba Thursday of the Higher Council on Tourism was very productive because concrete decisions, including a five-part plan to develop areas of the seaside city, were taken, according to Minister of Tourism Abdul Ilah Khathib.

After a thorough review of development plans, the council decided on the need to develop the city of Aqaba itself and a resort area on the south beach.

The immediate plan, he said, calls for developing two locations on the north beach (the existing city of Aqaba) to include two new hotels. On the south beach, the plan is to develop a major resort area of international standards, including another hotel.

The council also discussed the feasibility of opening a large convention facility in the area.

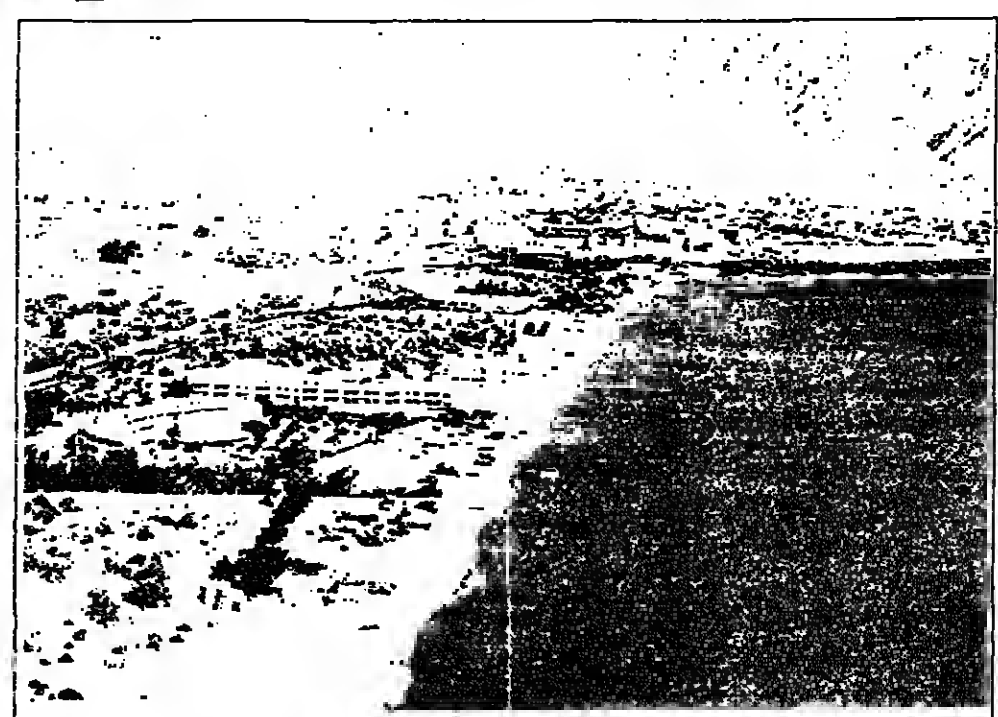
On the long term, the council will take a fresh comprehensive look at the region to include tourism, transportation, and

sea, railway and industry. The council also discussed ways to enhance the number of flights to Aqaba by both Royal Jordanian and charter flights, Mr. Khathib said.

The minister stressed that the city of Aqaba was a focus of the meeting because it is viewed as an attraction in itself as it has a local community which deserves attention and the improvement of services.

At the end of the meeting, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker urged the concerned authorities to start immediately implementing the plans discussed earlier and stressed that they should benefit from the advantages of the peace treaty with Israel and the new positive circumstances to convert Aqaba into an important tourist attraction especially as the city is close to other major attractions such as the Dead Sea, Wadi Rum and Petra.

Prior to taking its decisions, the council was briefed by Aqaba Region Authority (ARA) President Fayez Khasawneh on an integrated development plan



Aerial view of Aqaba (file photo)

for the region in general and the southern coast in particular. The members of the council and the Prime Minister later toured various sections of Aqaba and the sites of the proposed projects.

The council, which is responsible for tourism development policies, is made up of the ministers of tourism, finance, transport, interior, industry and trade, planning, water and irrigation, health, and culture in addition to Aqaba Regional Authority President, the President and Chief Executive Officer of Royal Jordanian, the director of the Social Security Corporation and representatives of the private sector.

JMA organises cancer seminar

AMMAN (Petra) — At least 200 delegates from Arab and foreign countries will gather in Amman today for the first Jordanian conference on cancerous tumours organised by the Jordanian Medical Association (JMA).

Conference chairman Yafya Dajani said Friday that during the two-day meetings the delegates will review at least 35 working papers dealing with the treatment of tumours.

He said that the delegates also discuss the latest techniques used in diagnosing cancer and the early detection of cancer symptoms as well as the rate of

cancer cases in the Arab World.

Dr. Dajani said that a seminar on the means to combat cancer will be held on the sidelines of the two-day conference, with delegates reviewing cases reported from eight Arab countries.

He said a medical exhibition displaying the latest in medical instruments and equipment will be held during the conference.

Taking part in the conference are Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the U.S. and the United Kingdom.

College exam results in better scores

AMMAN (Petra) — The overall pass rate at the community college General Certificate Examination was 70.39 per cent, according to Ministry of Higher Education Secretary General Ahmad H. Isban, who announced the results Thursday at a press conference. Dr. Isban said this year's results represent an improvement over previous years. He said that out of 13,260 students who took the examinations this year, 9,334 students passed the examination in the various streams offered, which include academic, educational, engineering, agricultural, para-medical, hotel management, social work, applied art, computer, and financial and administrative sciences.

Department calls for plastics clean up to protect livestock, environment

AMMAN (Petra) — The Environment Department has set up a committee to ease the problem of waste plastic materials on hungry livestock and damage to the environment, according to department director Saleh Sharee Friday.

The move comes in implementation of the provisions of a law on the environment endorsed by parliament this summer.

Dr. Sharee said the law provides for measures to protect the country from all forms of pollutants, including plastic materials which mostly affect agriculture and livestock.

The Kingdom imports nearly 50,000 tonnes of plastic materials at the cost of JD 18 million annually, Dr. Sharee said. An estimated JD 3 million's worth of livestock a year are lost as a result of these plastic materials being consumed by goats and sheep, according to Dr. Sharee.

The committee has presented the department with a set of recommendations aimed at curtailing the country's losses and protecting the environment from pollution, he said.

One of the recommendations, which the department will soon put into force, calls for the collection of used plastic sheets for recycling, Dr. Sharee said.

He said the committee also recommended that the department conduct a nation-wide public awareness programmes on recycling and proper disposal of plastic wastes.

The committee also recommends the use of paper bags instead, added Dr. Sharee.

He said also that the department has issued appeals to the municipal and village councils to implement the provisions of the new law on the environment by stepping up their collection of waste plastic and maintaining public gardens and preventing citizens from raising livestock within the municipality's boundaries.

The department's endeavours will be highlighted Saturday at a seminar to be held in Ajloun on the local council's role in protecting the environment.

The seminar, which is organised by the Jordanian Environment Society (JES), will be addressed by Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs Nader Thuheirat and other officials.

Stationery in short supply as students prepare for start of school year

AMMAN (J.T.) — With three days left before the start of the new scholastic year, students and their parents are having difficulty finding school supplies on the shelves of local stationery and book stores, despite assurances made by the Ministry of Supply that the current shortage will soon be over.

In particular short supply are the 64 and 80-sheet notebooks.

A spokesman for the ministry told the Jordan Television weekly morning programme that notebooks are available at the Civil and Military consumer corporations, in addition to bookshops.

He admitted, however, a shortage of 35 per cent of the total requirements for the entire scholastic year.

The shortage is apparently caused by a rift between the Ministry of Supply and the notebook producers, who want a bigger profit margin in the wake of a worldwide rise in paper prices.

The ministry recently reached an agreement with stationery manufacturers under which it approved a rise in the prices of stationery as of May 31, 1995.

Since that date, prices of the 32, 64, and 80-sheet notebooks have been increased to 75, 125 and 150 fils respectively.

Despite the new price increase, notebooks are still in short supply, and retailers and bookshops refuse to sell these items in large quantities, claiming they only make a 2 fils profit on each notebook.

Retailers say that other stationery items, such as pencils, pens, erasers, pencil sharpeners, tags and rulers bring in a larger profit than the notebooks because they are not priced by the government.

The ministry spokesman said that the Civil Servants Consumer Corporation (CSCC) and the Military Consumer Establishment both received almost three million notebooks as of Aug. 1.

But both establishments are only open to beneficiaries, and not to the general public.

Stationery manufacturers have produced almost 1,600 tonnes of paper during the period between June 1 and Aug. 6, and the market requirement for the whole scholastic year is almost 2,400 tonnes, the ministry spokesman said.

He expected the current crisis, which is attributed to the high demand for stationery, to be over soon, because factories are working at full capacity to cover the market needs.

China seen seeking nuclear might

(Continued from page 12)

over the test, and urged China to "halt all nuclear tests and demonstrate leadership in global non-proliferation efforts."

In Europe, Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson and Danish Foreign Minister Niels Helveg Petersen both expressed "deep regret" over the test.

Even France, itself under fire for its plans to resume nuclear tests in the south

Pacific, criticised the Chinese test. It said its own tests were limited in number and that it had invited international nuclear monitors to the site of the tests to ensure their safety.

In Wellington, New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger said: "This is all the more reprehensible in the light of the current widespread protest at France's decision to resume nuclear testing in the

South Pacific."

Mr. Bolger said it was particularly disturbing that the explosion came shortly after 18 Asia-Pacific nations had called for an immediate end to all nuclear testing in the region.

Mr. Bolger said New Zealand's ambassador in Beijing, Chris Elder, had been instructed to register "our opposition at the highest possible level."

Shahal steps up anti-PLO push

(Continued from page 1)

Jerusalem to inquire about their links to the PNA and the financing of their activities.

The groups, formed before the signing of the Oslo accords, were the Land and Water Centre, the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre (JMCC), the Hydrology Group, the International Child Protection Institution and the Psychological Guidance Centre. Palestinian officials said.

JMCC Director Ghassan Khathib, a former peace negotiator, complained: "Our centre is licensed and strives for independence, professionalism and freedom in the press."

The Land and Water Centre, formed in 1990, said in a statement that the measures were a "campaign of apartheid" against the Palestinians.

Mr. Shahal called Monday for the closure of all institutions linked to the PNA in the Holy City, which "damages" Israeli "sovereignty" over Jerusalem.

In letters exchanged on Oct. 11, 1993, Israel committed itself "not to impede the activities" of institutions in East Jerusalem, but rather to encourage them.

In return the PLO promised that the "bodies charged with exercising powers of the Palestinian National Authority will be set up in the Gaza Strip and Jericho" self-rule regions.

The Palestinians want East Jerusalem as the capital of an eventual state, while Israel insists it will keep the eastern sector of the Holy City, which it "annexed" after the 1967 war.

Pelletreau affirms U.S. pledge

(Continued from page 1)

United Nations Sanctions Committee. The Kingdom has stressed that its decision to grant asylum to general Hassan does not usher in a change on its policy towards Iraq. It said the decision was prompted by humanitarian considerations and Jordan will not interfere in the internal affairs of Iraq.

But parliament members remained uneasy about the government's move, warning against joining the U.S. administration against the Iraqi regime.

News agencies said General Hassan has held a number of meetings with Western officials, but Jordanian officials have denied that such meetings took place.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said that Shari Zeid discussed with Mr. Pelletreau preparations for the AENA summit, emphasising that Jordan works towards having a proposed bank for development in the Middle East as a development bank and not a commercial institution.

Mr. Pelletreau was accompanied on the visit by Special Assistant to the President National Security Mark Paris.

Kuwait upbeat on ties with Jordan

(Continued from page 1)

its ambassador at the height of the Gulf crisis. The Jordanian embassy in Kuwait remains closed.

More than 300,000 Jordanians, many of Palestinian origin, were forced to leave the emirate because of the crisis.

Earlier this month Mr.

Kabariti and Sheikh Subah gave the first interview in five years to newspaper each other's countries.

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Chechen negotiators warn they might quit peace talks

MOSCOW (AFP) — Chechen negotiators warned Friday they might break off peace talks after an outbreak of fighting jeopardised efforts to implement a Russian-Chechen military accord.

"For unknown and incomprehensible reasons, Russia is placing us in circumstances under which the peace process simply cannot be continued," Akhmad Idigov, speaker of the Chechen separatist parliament, told Moscow Echo radio.

"After the bombing of Chechen villages by Russian warplanes it will be hard to persuade people to surrender their weapons and hand over prisoners," he said.

Russian warplanes bombed Chechen separatist forces Thursday near the village of Roshni Chu, some 60 kilometres southwest of Grozny, in an eruption of fighting which threatened to scupper the joint military accord signed July 30.

A Russian defence ministry spokesman said the air raids came after Chechen forces attacked Russian troops.

Separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev's spokesman, Movladi Udogov, told Moscow Echo Friday that the Chechen delegation "is suspending all official contacts with the Russian side and is not prepared to resume talks to find a peaceful solution to the conflict."

However, Russian and Chechen military officials continued talks in Grozny

aimed at speeding up the disarmament of Chechen fighters in line with the accord.

Under the agreement, Chechen fighters are due to surrender their weapons and self-defence units of up to 25 lightly armed men are to be set up in villages as Russian troops withdraw.

Russia is to leave behind one brigade of interior ministry troops and one mechanised brigade of army troops in Chechnya for a total of about 6,000 troops.

But disagreements over disarmament and lists of prisoners have held up implementation of the accord.

The Russian military command said Friday that seven Russian soldiers were wounded in clashes with Chechen fighters in the past 24 hours, and the rebels fired on Russian troops 22 times overnight using automatic weapons and rocket-launchers.

Meanwhile, a blast rocked Grozny's main power station overnight, depriving the city of its newly-restored supply of electricity, the Interfax news agency reported.

Chechen fighters handed over a small quantity of weapons in the southeastern village of Zandak Wednesday, and more weapons were surrendered in the Shali and Gudumers districts Thursday, but clashes in Achkhoy Martan and other areas of western Chechnya later disrupted the disarmament plans.

Anatoly Romanov, Russian military commander in Chechnya, and Aslan Maskhadov, commander of Chechen forces, sent representatives to Achkhoy Martan, a village 40 kilometres southwest of the devastated Chechen capital, to halt the fighting there.

Mr. Romanov and Mr. Maskhadov have held talks almost daily since the military accord was signed.

The Russian delegation proposed that talks on Chechnya's future political status should be postponed pending progress over demilitarisation of the small Caucasus republic.

However, Chechen delegation leader Khodzha-Akhmed Yarkhanov said Thursday political talks would resume in Grozny Aug. 21.

Both sides are still far apart on the status issue, with the Chechens demanding independence and the Russians insisting that the republic remain part of the Russian Federation.

Russian troops stormed into Chechnya Dec. 11 to crush a three-year independence drive led by Mr. Dudayev.

A fragile ceasefire has been in effect since June 20. The Chechen side brought five Russian prisoners to Grozny Thursday.

Husein Iskanov, an aide to Mr. Maskhadov, said three of the five were not included in a list of seven which the Chechen negotiators had presented to the Russian side.



ANTI-NUCLEAR PROTESTS: A female demonstrator shouts anti-Chinese nuclear test slogans in front of the Chinese embassy in Tokyo Friday. About 16 leftist protesters staged a demonstration against Thursday's second nuclear test by China (AFP photo)

China city gives free oxygen to traffic cops

BEIJING (R) — The owner of an "oxygen bar" in China's northeastern city of Dalian is offering free doses to traffic police who spend all day breathing the city's noxious carbon-monoxide fumes, Xinhua news agency said Friday. The owner of the oxygen bar in the city of Dalian has issued special cards to 350 local traffic policemen, allowing them to go to his bar to inhale pure oxygen once a week, it said. The oxygen content of normal air is 21 per cent oxygen, but due to pollution in China's industrial north the percentage is often lower, and people breathing such air become easily tired, Xinhua said. An adult needs 500 litres of oxygen a day, it said. Inhaling pure oxygen helps people to relax and become more energetic, it said. China already has oxygen bars in Beijing, Fuzhou, Hangzhou and Shenzhen in the south and the northeastern industrial metropolis of Shenyang.

Thai AIDS scare boosts child prostitution in Manila

MANILA (AFP) — The AIDS epidemic in Thailand has caused a rapid increase in child prostitution in the Philippines, a Filipino senator said Friday. Senate labour committee chairman Ernesto Herrera said in a statement that there was an "increasing number of suspected foreign pedophiles visiting Manila," where he said the bulk of the pedophiles visiting Manila, where he said the bulk of the country's 60,000 male and prostitutes aged 15 and below ply their trade. The influx "may be attributed to the increasing number of HIV-positive prostitutes in Thailand," as reported by the United Nations Children's Fund in a study, he said in a statement. Mr. Herrera, who is seeking the death penalty for child abuse, said three Britons, two Australians and a Frenchman have been detained by Philippine authorities on suspicion that they sexually abused children.

Michael Jackson goes online with fans worldwide

NEW YORK (R) — Pop star Michael Jackson went online with his fans for the first time on Thursday night, giving them an earful about his marriage, music and the media. "Never believe that tabloid garbage," Mr. Jackson wrote online when asked about a British tabloid newspaper report that he was on the verge of divorcing Lisa Marie Presley, daughter of Elvis. "Don't waste your time or money. No, it's not true," Mr. Jackson told the thousands who logged onto a question and answer session with the king of pop on three online computer services that was broadcast on MTV along with some of his best-known music videos. The event was dominated by questions such as which superhero Mr. Jackson would like to be (possibly Batman) and who would he choose to be out of anyone dead or alive. He said Michaelangelo.

Clinton just swinging around in Wyoming

JACKSON HOLE, Wyoming (R) — Rafting, hiking, fishing, horseback riding — it's all there for Bill Clinton in the Tetons Mountains. But so far he's sticking to the old reliable: Knocking little white balls around with a club. On the second day of his vacation, Mr. Clinton worked on his golf game at Jackson Hole Golf and Tennis Club with club pro Al Weinhold and financier James Wolfensohn. As Mr. Clinton plays hole after hole, Hillary Rodham Clinton has been at her writing desk, at their vacation residence. She has been writing her weekly newspaper column as well as working on her book about child-raising.

It takes one crook to catch another

JOHANNESBURG (R) — A South African lobby group for the rights of prisoners pledged to help police tackle the country's growing crime wave. "It takes a crook to catch another crook," the Organisation for Human Rights said in a statement. "We are prepared to assist in curbing crime, corruption and violence by recruiting members of the community and ex-prisoners to infiltrate crime syndicates and racketeers," it said.

NATO, former Soviet bloc foes wage joint exercises

FORT POLK, LA. (R) — Troop planes, helicopters and trucks lined up on Friday to ferry 1,200 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and former Soviet bloc foes into one of their most realistic joint military exercises yet in a programme that is to lead to some of the old foes' NATO membership.

The former adversaries are training together in the sixth major partnership for peace military exercise, the first to be conducted in the United States.

The troops from three NATO countries and 14 former Soviet bloc countries: were to be blown and trucked to a supposed buffer zone between two hostile countries on an Atlantic island.

Fort Polk has one of the most realistic training programmes in the world and actors were on hand to play angry mobs and badly wounded civilians. U.S. soldiers were assigned to be

snipers and handits. Colonel Ray Fitzgerald, one of the officers in charge of the exercise, said the troops flying in went through an air safety drill on Thursday and he saw so many black stars of non-understanding that a second drill was ordered.

That is because the biggest problem the partnership for peace military exercises have encountered is the obvious one: The language barrier. Translators in each platoon have to repeat every order.

A Canadian officer said the problems in conducting fast-moving military operations in so many languages have not been solved and said there is occasional friction between soldiers from countries with age-old hatreds.

But a group of British soldiers took the language problem in stride.

"It's a little slower but we get there in the end," said Private Paul Brazier, 24. He said he saw convivial

ity, not hostility, among the troops from so many countries — "sawing T-shirts, things like that."

The soldiers are from the United States, Britain, Canada, Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, the Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

Partnership for Peace troops are to participate only in peacekeeping operations. But NATO is to formally decide in the next few months whether to accept some of the former Soviet bloc countries into NATO and the timetable and conditions for doing so.

Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are widely regarded to be the first of them to become NATO members. Hungary's prime minister, Gyula Horn, has said he believes it will become a NATO member in 1997.

COLOMBO (Agencies) — Tamil rebels Friday attacked army troops and a police post in separate incidents in Sri Lanka's embattled northeast, wounding 16 security personnel and losing three of their own, military officials said.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) ambushed government troops in northern Mahawilachchiya after an armoured personnel carrier in which the soldiers were travelling escaped being hit by a rebel mine, officials said.

Having failed to blow up the military vehicle, LTTE rebels attacked the troops and army reinforcements sent to the area, wounding 14 soldiers, four of them seriously, officials said.

They said troops beat off the attack but LTTE casualties were not immediately known.

LTTE guerrillas attacked a police post in eastern Batticaloa district but the pre-dawn assault was repulsed, leaving at least three LTTE rebels

dead, officials said. Two constables at the Puliyadi police post were wounded.

The rebel attacks followed intense aerial strikes on LTTE targets in the past week.

On Thursday, the airforce destroyed a Tiger naval facility in eastern Vegal, killing three rebels, and bombed an LTTE airfield in northern Iranamadu over a two-day period, military spokesman Sarath M. Munsinghe said.

"We have bombed and damaged to such an extent that the airfield cannot be used unless the terrorists start extensive repair work," Mr. Munsinghe said, adding that airforce pilots had not seen any activity at the rebel airfield.

However, there have been no reports so far of the LTTE using an aircraft but the rebels are believed to have acquired six micro light aircraft from France several years ago.

The LTTE is fighting for a separate state in the north-

east for Sri Lanka's two million-minority Tamils, who are a majority in the region. More than 50,000 have died in the protracted ethnic conflict.

In another development Friday, Sinhalese nationalists, accompanied by Buddhist monks, set off on a motorcade from the capital Colombo to demonstrate their opposition to the Sri Lankan government's plans to give autonomy to minority Tamils.

Witnesses said about 400 people were in cars, buses and vans heading to the holy city of Kataragama, 180 kilometres south of Colombo, for a Buddhist ceremony.

The demonstration was led by nationalist politician Dinesh Gunawardena, who has said he is against any plan that could lead to the breakup of Sri Lanka.

Buddhist priests have been at the forefront of opposition to the devolution plan and have urged the government

to wait until LTTE are defeated.

"The government this month announced a long-awaited 'peace plan' giving extensive autonomy to Tamils to try to end the 12-year ethnic conflict in which more than 50,000 people have died."

The plan was welcomed by Western governments and all Tamil parties except the Tamil Tiger guerrillas, who have stepped up attacks on military and civilian targets since they unilaterally broke a three-month truce.

Justice Minister G.L. Peiris on Thursday ruled out further talks with the Tigers, saying the rebels had rejected previous offers to discuss the peace plan.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan authorities said Friday they were still mystified about badly decomposed bodies of young males whose appearance in lakes and waterways close to the capital Colombo has revived chilling memories on the island.

Chilean premier to weaken military

SANTIAGO (R) — President Eduardo Frei will try to amend Chile's constitution to weaken the influence of the country's powerful armed forces in politics, officials said Thursday.

At the same time, Mr. Frei will bow to military wishes and propose a law that would limit trials of officers accused of committing human rights abuses during Chile's former military regime, officials said.

The give-and-take strategy was clearly aimed at soothing Mr. Frei's strained relations with the armed forces on the human rights issue while giving him more control over the military, which ruled Chile for 17 years until 1990.

"The president's initiative will seek to overcome pending problems in the areas of national reconciliation and consolidation of our democratic institutions," said chief spokesman Jose Joaquin Brunner.

Elected in 1993, Mr. Frei nominally controls the military as commander-in-chief, but the real power is held by army commander and former dictator General Augusto Pinochet, whom Mr. Frei is barred by law from removing.

Mr. Frei will propose abolishing eight military-appointed seats in the Chi-

lean senate when their current terms end in 1997. He will also propose giving the president the power to order military officers into retirement, officials said.

Currently the president, in spite of being commander-in-chief, must ask the military chiefs to send an errand officer into retirement if he wants the officer fired.

One glaring example is army Brigadier Pedro Espinoza, who is serving a six-year prison sentence for the 1976 murder in Washington of exiled socialist leader Orlando Letelier. Even as he languished in a jail cell, Mr. Espinoza remains an active duty officer who can be forced into retirement only by Mr. Pinochet.

Mr. Frei will also seek to reduce the military's power over two important state councils. All the measures will require approval from congress and amendments to Chile's 1980 military-dictated constitution.

The military's lingering power to politics has often been a point of embarrassment for Chile's civilian rulers as they try to project a more modern image for the country, which has a booming economy and is due to join NAFTA next year.

India: rescuing hostages must be last resort

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — As security experts gathered in Kashmir, the Indian governor said Friday a rescue operation to free four Western hostages from separatist guerrillas must be "a last resort."

K.V. Krishna Rao, the federally appointed governor of Jammu-Kashmir state, said a military rescue would be difficult without risking the hostages' lives, but he didn't rule out the option if negotiations fail.

"You have to have patience, to see that all the diplomatic and peaceful efforts have a chance to succeed," Mr. Rao said in an interview at the governor's mansion.

"If we launched an operation to rescue the hostages in the high Himalayas, the captors would probably see it coming and have time to decide to eliminate the hostages," said Mr. Rao, a retired general and former army commander.

He said the four hostages apparently were being held in one group and moving each day through dense mountain forests.

A previously unknown group calling itself Al Faran has been holding the American, two Britons and a German, offering to exchange them for 15 jailed militants.

Last weekend, the kidnappers executed Norwegian hostage Hans Christian Ostro and threatened to kill the other captives by Tuesday night.

But Mr. Rao said the militants told Indian negotiators Wednesday that all the captives were still alive and in good health, which he said was an indication that the contacts have made some progress.

In London Tim Devin, a member of parliament disclosed that Al Faran promised to provide photographs, tape recordings or answers to questions only the hostages would know to prove that their captives are still alive.

India has flown anti-terrorist commandos to Jammu-Kashmir from its elite Black Cats Unit. Reports in New Delhi said U.S. British, and German experts also arrived in Srinagar Thursday, but the embassies of those countries refused to confirm or deny the reports.

Bermuda premier to resign as independence is rejected

HAMILTON, Bermuda (R) — Bermuda, a British territory for almost 100 years, voted overwhelmingly against independence, officials said on Thursday, prompting its longtime premier to resign.

Although the electoral outcome parallels opinion polls held before the vote, it cast the colony's government into disarray as long-time Premier Sir John Swan said he would keep his promise to resign if independence were rejected.

"He has reaffirmed this morning his decision to leave as soon as he can find a successor for him," said Gavin Shorto, director of Bermuda Government Information Services, after the vote results were released.

The independence referendum had been delayed for 24 hours from Tuesday to Wednesday because of Hurricane Felix, which churned south of Bermuda on Tuesday causing such authorities estimated to be a minor \$2 million in damages, said Mr. Shorto.

Deputy Premier John Irving Pearman, the minister of labour and home affairs, had said he would resign if independence failed, leaving the ruling United Bermuda Party (UBP) scrambling to form an interim government.

Mr. Pearman was out of the country until Aug. 28 and unavailable for comment.

Officials said Mr. Swan made his announcement after the release of election results early on Thursday showing 73.7 per cent of voters had said "no" to independence, compared with 25.6 per cent in favour.

Election officials said the vote against independence was 16,369 while those in favour numbered 5,714. Bermuda's population of about 60,000 includes 38,000 eligible voters.

"My letter of resignation was predicated on the outcome," Mr. Swan told the Royal Gazette, Bermuda's only daily newspaper, in Thursday's edition.

Mr. Swan was not expected to submit a formal resignation to Governor Lord David Waddington, the queen's representative in Bermuda and technically the head of state, until his UBPP has been elected a successor.

A caucus of senior members of the party and UBPP members of parliament and senators was due to meet late Friday to try to select a successor. But political observers said no clear candidate has appeared.

The UBPP will stay in power until there is a general election, which political observers do not expect soon.

The vote was Bermuda's first-ever independence referendum. The Atlantic archipelago was first inhabited by Britons in 1609 when a ship bound for Virginia foundered there. It became part of the Virginia Company's dominions in 1612 and a royal colony in 1684.

Most Bermudians, who enjoy one of the world's highest standards of living, had questioned why their political leaders favoured independence.

Bermuda, with pink sand beaches and a balmy climate, prides itself on a stable, low-tax, business-friendly environment. Crime is very low and unemployment practically non-existent.

Mr. Swan's ruling party was split over the issue. The opposition Labour Party favoured independence but urged supporters to stay away from the polls.

Many feared the uncertainties of independence would drive away well-paying offshore businesses. Opponents also argued that with independence Bermudians would lose the advantages of travelling with British passports and the security of knowing the British military was available in a crisis.

World News

China city offers free oxygen in traffic cops

BEIJING (R) — A city in the northeast of China is offering free oxygen to traffic police who are breathing the carbon-monoxide fumes from cars in the city. The owner of the local traffic police station said the oxygen was given to the police to go to work in the city. The oxygen was given to the police to go to work in the city. The oxygen was given to the police to go to work in the city.

Thai AIDS cases boost child prostitution in Manila

MANILA (AFP) — The AIDS epidemic in Thailand has caused a rapid increase in child prostitution in Manila, a Philippine city, said a Thai official. The official said that there was a need to increase the number of children in the country's 60,000 child prostitution industry. The official said that there was a need to increase the number of children in the country's 60,000 child prostitution industry.

Michael Jackson goes online with fans worldwide

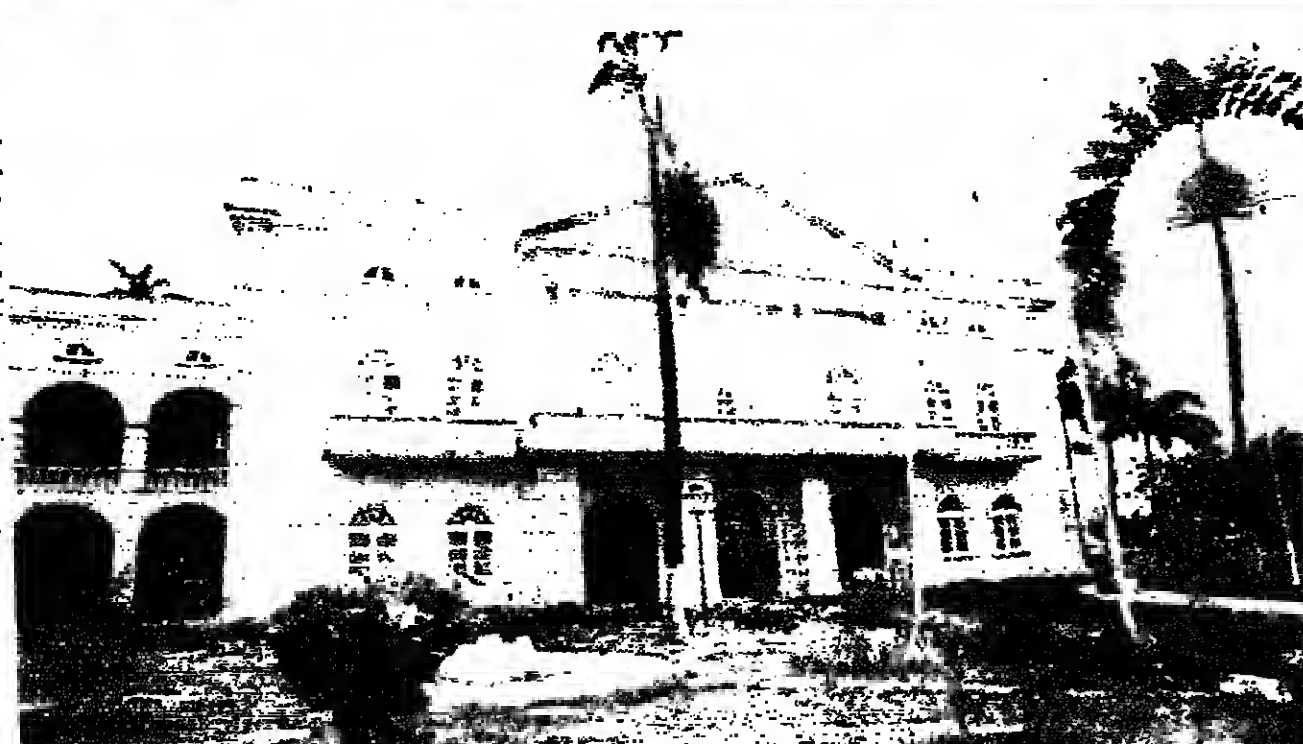
NEW YORK (R) — Michael Jackson has taken his fans to the Internet with his new website. The website is called "The Jacksons Official Website" and it features a lot of information about the Jackson family. The website is called "The Jacksons Official Website" and it features a lot of information about the Jackson family.

Clinton just swinging around Wyoming

JACKSON HOLE, Wyo. (R) — Bill Clinton is in Wyoming for a few days. He is going to be in Jackson Hole for a few days. He is going to be in Jackson Hole for a few days.

It takes one to catch another

JOHANNESBURG (R) — A South African judge has ruled that it takes one to catch another. The judge said that it takes one to catch another. The judge said that it takes one to catch another.



Updated file picture showing the presidential palace of Sao Tome (AFP photo)

Appointment of Sao Tome interim president in doubt

LISBON (R) — The appointment of Sao Tome and Principe's interim president by the Portuguese government is in doubt. The Portuguese government is in doubt. The Portuguese government is in doubt.

Indonesian youths burn Australian flag in protest

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesian youths burned the Australian flag in protest. The youths burned the Australian flag in protest. The youths burned the Australian flag in protest.

Liberia warlords still far from accord

ABUJA (R) — Liberian warlords are still far from reaching an accord. The warlords are still far from reaching an accord. The warlords are still far from reaching an accord.

U.N. Human Development Report released

Status of women: skills increase, equality lags

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The United Nations Human Development Report has been released. The report shows that the status of women is improving, but equality is still lagging. The report shows that the status of women is improving, but equality is still lagging.

Simpson jury may make trip to scene of murder

LOS ANGELES (R) — The jury in the Simpson case may make a trip to the scene of the murder. The jury may make a trip to the scene of the murder. The jury may make a trip to the scene of the murder.

Key figures indicted in Whitewater probe

LITTLE ROCK, Arkansas (R) — Key figures in the Whitewater scandal have been indicted. The indictment is a major development in the Whitewater probe. The indictment is a major development in the Whitewater probe.

Hurricane threat wanes for East Coast

Quake shocks California desert

NAGS HEAD, North Carolina (R) — The threat of Hurricane Felix has waned for the East Coast. The threat of Hurricane Felix has waned for the East Coast. The threat of Hurricane Felix has waned for the East Coast.



Judge Lance Ito

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975.

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A welcome turn of the tides

THE SUCCESS of the visit of Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti to Saudi Arabia became an established fact when Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal declared that Jordanian-Saudi relations have been restored to their normal level. The Saudi declaration came in the wake of Mr. Kabariti's talks with Saudi leaders, headed by King Fahd.

This development in bilateral ties is very significant given the tense relationship that resulted from serious differences that arose from the Gulf crisis and war in 1990 and 1991. The latest breakthrough entails, over and above its positive implications for inter-Arab relations generally, the appointment of a new Saudi ambassador to Jordan and Saudi participation in the upcoming Economic conference on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), in Amman. In addition, the way is now open for a summit meeting to take place between King Hussein and King Fahd.

There is no doubt that the recent events in Iraq have contributed to speeding up the search for a true reconciliation between the two kingdoms. All doubts about where Jordan really stands on the situation in Iraq should have dissipated by now and we hope our position on the Gulf crisis and war will have also been better understood by our Arab brothers in the Gulf. What Jordan is concerned with is ensuring a better future for all Arab peoples. Its decision to oppose the Western coalition against Iraq was predicated on its belief that a less damaging option to the interests of the Arab World could have been used to end the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which it unequivocally condemned. Its stand on the recent development on Iraq is also aimed at nothing but helping alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people.

We cannot but express our satisfaction at the restoration of full and warm relations between our country and Saudi Arabia. The interruption of fraternal contacts between us was but an aberration that was destined to end sooner or later. And now that we are on the brink of a new era in relations, we need to articulate and incorporate new guidelines and mechanisms that would assure the continuation of the present course. There is no better way to attain this objective than to institutionalise relations on firm and clear grounds that are solid enough to withstand transient misunderstandings.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in Al Ra'i Arabic daily accused the United States of violating the international law by demanding that Jordan play a direct role in changing the regime in Iraq and in interfering in that country's internal affairs against its own will. Fahd Al Faneek said that this was unacceptable to Jordan which realises that interference in other people's affairs had brought about many tragedies to the Arab Nation over the past 40 years and was in contradiction with the Arab code of honour which the Kingdom is currently formulating with the other Arab states. It is true that the United States has expressed willingness to protect Jordan from any Iraqi attack but the Iraqis are not poised to launch attack on Jordan because it is not in their own interests and would achieve nothing for Baghdad. Washington is trying to use any excuse for the sake of attacking Iraq to destroy that country again and is trying to involve Jordan in such an adventure. Noting that Jordan is currently relying on Iraqi oil and that the Iraqi market imports 10 to 25 per cent of Jordanian exports, the writer said that President Bill Clinton who is enthusiastic about an attack on Iraq had not declared that his country would compensate Jordan for such a loss or would supply oil to Jordan free of charge or at half price. The writer warned of the danger of going along with the American plot against the Iraqi nation adding that American pledges to protect Jordan were not needed and not necessary.

AL DUSTOUR daily focused attention on Jordanian-Saudi relations describing Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti's mission in Riyadh as giving cause for optimism that inter-Arab relations are finally on their way to witness improvement following five years of strain. The daily said that the Jordanian people are looking forward to seeing their ties with Saudi Arabia on their right course again and that cooperation between the sister countries in various fields are restored at the highest level. As Mr. Kabariti had said Saudi-Jordanian ties had always served as an axis for building solid ties among Arab states and therefore Jordanians were hopeful that such relations would be restored and bolstered in the interest of the two countries and the Arab World at large, said the daily. Strong Saudi-Jordanian relations are much needed at the present as the Arab region is witnessing serious events and as the Arab Nation is moving into an era of peace with Israel, added the paper.

Jordanian Perspective

By Dr. Musa Keilani

A European decision worthy of praise

THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU) deserves praise and appreciation for its courageous decision not to fall victim of Israeli tactics by boycotting the "Jerusalem birthday" party that Israel is holding in September. The EU move reflects a clear understanding not only of Arab and Muslim sensitivity over Jerusalem but also of Israel's carefully-orchestrated moves to consolidate its grip and claim over the Holy City through political, social and cultural moves.

No wonder the EU decision ruffled more than a few feathers in Israel, which was betting on European participation in the September bash to offer a measure of legitimacy to the Jewish state's claim to Jerusalem. If the EU states attend the "3,000th birthday" of Jerusalem, it would be a tacit endorsement of Israeli assertion that the Holy City was Israeli 3,000 years ago. As it turned out, the European outmanoeuvred the Israelis by bringing out the political element behind the "party" through pointing out that the final status of Jerusalem is an issue that should be negotiated between the Palestinians and Israelis and as such Europe was not ready to endorse the Israeli claim to the city.

We do not really know at this point how much of Arab and Muslim lobbying went into prompting the EU to politely turn down the Israeli invitation, but the move should remind us all that we should not relax our vigil against the continued Israeli campaign to achieve fait accompli in Jerusalem at all levels.

We have to remember that the Jerusalem bash is slated to continue for 15 months, and we should expect to see a strong Israeli effort to bring in many reluctant countries to directly or indirectly participate in whatever the Jewish state intends to do during this period in the context of the Holy City.

Close in the wake of the European announcement of boycott of the "Jerusalem birthday party" came a tightening of Israel's opposition to foreign dignitaries meeting Palestinian officials at the Orient House, the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), after the deputy prime minister of Sweden, Mona Sahlin, called off a visit to the Holy City and a meeting with PLO officials there. "Even courtesy calls to the Orient House has a political character, these days," an Israeli minister was quoted as saying, referring to the called-off plan of the Swedish minister. (We cannot but recall that Sweden still remembers that it was an Israeli hand that killed Count Folke Bernadotte, who stood among many Europeans for his quest for justice and fairness in Palestine,

in 1948).

It is indeed ironic that Israel sees a "political character" to a foreign dignitary meeting PLO officials at the Orient House but fails to mention that the entire planning behind the "Jerusalem birthday party" is politically oriented. Not that we would expect Israel to publicly acknowledge that reality, but it is naive at best on its part to believe that the outside world is oblivious to its plans and designs.

We have always argued that Jerusalem could be one of the thorniest issues in any Arab-Israeli peace settlement. Israel also understands it but it is going its own way trying to change facts on the ground by the time serious negotiations start on the status of Jerusalem. By virtue of its occupation and control over Arab East Jerusalem, Israel is indeed in a better position to advance its quest. But a majority of the international community would not go along with it. That was the clear message that Israel should take from the European decision to stay away from its bash in Jerusalem. Of course, we cannot expect Israel, single-minded as it is not to relinquish Arab Jerusalem, final status negotiations or not, to learn from the message. What we can expect now is a revival of moves by pro-Israeli and Israeli-influenced members of the U.S. Congress to further extend American support for the Israeli claim. Although the moves may not amount to much in terms of a public American recognition of Israel's claim to Jerusalem as its "united, eternal capital" — given the Clinton administration's rejection of the idea — the very debate over the issue could boost the Israeli stand.

Let us state once again the reality on the ground: No matter what Israel does or intends to do, the Arabs and Muslims would not let go of Arab East Jerusalem. Israel has secured some measure of legitimacy in the region through the peace process, but it is equally easy for the Jewish state to lose that legitimacy if it persists on its stubborn stand over Jerusalem.

Jordan has signed a peace treaty with Israel, which, in turn, acknowledges the Hashemites' special role in the Holy City. That special role definitely is part and parcel of the Arab and Muslim character and identity of Arab East Jerusalem. But a simple acknowledgement of the Hashemites' role is not enough. We in Jordan would fight tooth and nail to establish that role, on behalf of the Arabs and Muslims without prejudicing the Palestinians' political rights in Arab East Jerusalem. Israel would be far better off understanding and appreciating that reality.

Jordan should not be embroiled in Iraqi affairs, writers urge

The Week in Print

Reviewed by Elia Nasrallah

THE FLIGHT of senior Iraqi officials and army officers to Jordan dominated the Arabic press in the past week. The situation in the occupied Arab territories, pan-Arab affairs and domestic issues also figures prominently in the editorials and in columnists' articles.

A writer in Al Dustour criticised the United States for seeking to involve Jordan in "hostile actions against Baghdad when Iraq openly declared its intention to maintain good relations with Jordan. We know that Baghdad is not planning to destroy its ties with Jordan at a time when Washington continues to insist that it would defend the Kingdom at a time when Washington continues to insist that it would defend the Kingdom in the face of alleged Iraqi aggression," said Mohammad Kawash. The writer said that it was clear from Washington's attitude and through its pressures on Jordan to stop trading with the Iraqi people that the U.S. hopes to tighten the sanctions on Iraq and close its only remaining outlet to the outside world. He said Washington believed that Jordanian people's ties with the Iraqi people are based merely on trade exchange rather than brotherly or national considerations.

A writer in Al Ra'i said Jordan should seek to mend fences with the Gulf states, and all other Arab countries and at the same time retain good relations with the United States. But maintaining good ties with the other Arab states should never be at the expense of destroying the Kingdom's ties with Iraq with which Jordan has a real interest. Jordan in fact has great and important interests with Iraq which provides it with cheap oil and which owes Jordan \$1,100 million that can only be repaid through trade, said Fahd Al Faneek. Hence we have reservations over Jordan's employment as a springboard for changing the regime in Baghdad and we can only hope that any possible change will be in favour of pluralism and democracy, said the writer. We hope that the Iraqi people will be offered the chance to take actual role in ruling themselves through an elected parliament which can help end the plight of the Iraqi people, the writer said.

Stressing that Jordan is not facing danger neither is in need of protection from any source, Tareq Masarweh, a writer in Al Ra'i, said that it was only natural for Jordan to grant asylum to Hussein Kamel Hassan and thousands of others from various Arab states over the years, because Jordanians are a hospitable people. The writer said that there was no meaning or justification for the big fuss created by the U.S. president over the defection issue because the Jordanian government has been clear about the affair stressing that it would not be involved in internal Iraqi affairs. The writer said however that any refugee living in Jordan should not be allowed to exercise any hostile activities against any regime in the Arab World especially that being away from one's homeland, one would have little influence on changing the regime in his country.

Masarweh's views were echoed by Bassam Emoush, another Al Ra'i columnist who said that while accepting the Iraqi refugees Jordan can by no means allow these guests to launch campaigns against

the rulers in their own country. A political refugee should not exploit hospitality accorded to him here in order to harm Jordan's relations with other Arab states, he stressed. Noting that European countries abound with political refugees who are not allowed to exercise any political activity against their own nations, the writer said that refugees living in Jordan should respect the laws of this country and should refrain from any moves that could harm Jordan's standing in the Arab World.

Under the title: Leave the Iraqis to decide their own internal affairs, a writer in Al Dustour said that it was important that Jordan remained neutral in the Iraqi question and refrained from anything that could be interpreted as a hostile action. Saleh Qallab said that there could be no justification or logical interpretation for Amman to involve itself in Iraq's internal matters under any excuse and should refuse to be lured towards such actions. The writer said that it should be remembered that being part of the regime until a week ago Hussein Kamel Hassan bears the responsibility for his own actions and that other Arabs have no say in deciding who should rule the Iraqi people.

In the view of Hamadeh Faraaneh, a writer in Al Dustour, the Iraqi government has taken a very clever move by inviting Rolf Ekeus and his team to Baghdad to provide him with further secrets which it said were withheld by Hussein Kamel Hassan. By doing so the Iraqi leadership has not only shown willingness to cooperate with the United Nations but has sought to shake the credibility of Hussein Kamel Hassan and his group who defected to Jordan. The writer said that by fleeing his country Hussein Kamel has not only lost credibility in the eyes of the Iraqi nation but has also lost access to future secrets and lost power of action against the regime to which he is opposed. The Baghdad regime is far from collapsing and if anything the move has strengthened the leadership and moved Iraq one more step closer towards the lifting of sanctions, Faraaneh said.

The longer the delay in the implementation of the second phase of the Oslo deal between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) the deeper will be the roots of the Jewish settlements in Arab lands, said Husni Ayyesh, a writer in Al Ra'i daily. We have to remember that had the Palestinians accepted the U.N. sponsored partition of Palestine in 1947 they would have been in control of half of Palestine now. He said that the PLO should put the pressure on the Rabin government to redeploy its forces and expand the Palestine self-rule authority as soon as possible and so abort the Jewish settler's rebellion and their attacks on Arab lands and property.

Indonesia anniversary raises questions for army

By Jeremy Wagstaff
Reuters

JAKARTA — From the days when, armed with spears and sticks, they stormed Japanese outposts in the heady first throes of the independence struggle, Indonesia's soldiers have seen themselves as defenders of the people.

This view has long justified a central place in political and military life, enshrined in the concept of "dual function".

But as the world's fourth largest country commemorates its 50th birthday this month, this role sits uneasily with many Indonesians who see the men in green as something less than heroes.

"It has many critics," said retired General Soemarto, who headed the powerful operational command for the restoration of security and order in the 1970s, of the armed forces, known by its Indonesian acronym ABRI.

ABRI cannot act against the current of public opinion, so a certain sense of accommodation and understanding should be shown by the ABRI, and there is an indication that ABRI has understood this," he said in an interview earlier this month.

Mr. Soemarto is one of many former military men who, for one reason or another, have turned from gamekeeper to poacher.

Even now retired General Abdul Haris Nasution, architect of the armed forces doctrine of "dual function," has long been a critic of its implementation. The army was a late arrival during the heady days of 1945.

While the country's first political leaders took the plunge of proclaiming independence in the interregnum between the Japanese occupation and the return of their Dutch overlords, they were reluctant to take up arms to fight for freedom.

This left a painful gap in the movement's defences until, a few months later, guerrillas formed their own army, elected their own leader and set the stage for future tensions.

"Owing to its reluctance to act promptly and decisively in the first days following the proclamation of independence, the government... lost its control over the Indonesian armed forces," wrote historian Salim Said in a book on the period.

Five decades later, the armed forces still sees itself playing a role beyond the purely military — from assisting villagers build bridges to having a definite say in government.

ABRI is small for the

size of the country it is supposed to defend, and with internal threats from guerrillas in East Timor, Aceh and Irian Jaya and looming regional trouble spots such as the Spratly Islands, there are many who sympathise with it.

Numbering some 300,000 personnel, it is poorly equipped to defend some 17,000 islands in an archipelago stretching the width of the United States. Under "dual function" most soldiers are not combat-ready, instead working as territorials.

This dual function has its detractors within ABRI's ranks too, sources close to the military say, including those younger ranking officers who see bridge-building and politicking as unbecoming a West Point graduate.

"There are many officers who support the notion of 'back to barracks' (propagated by some army officers)," one Indonesian journalist covering ABRI affairs said recently.

But there are others who see ABRI as defender of the faith, the only dependable force during the mayhem of the 1960s, when hundreds of thousands of Indonesians died in the wake of an aborted coup allegedly instigated by the Communists.

This role has ingrained a belief among many officers that ABRI deserves a continued say in the running of the country, and more controversially, should provide the next president.

This may depend on the present incumbent Suharto, who succeeded Sukarno in the wake of the 1960s bloodbath. He is a former general himself as well as an independence fighter.

But while not overtly stating his own view on the matter, diplomats say Mr. Suharto has been astute in clipping the military's wings, both for his own ends and to improve his somewhat tarnished image in the west.

Most academics see ABRI acknowledging the tide of history, but remaining determined to retain their role as ultimate guardian of the nation's interests.

"If a civilian becomes president they will not object so long as stability is maintained, so long as there is continued cooperation with ABRI in terms of its political role," said Yahya Muhaimin, an academic and author of a book on ABRI.

"ABRI is more sophisticated than in the past. They know their political theory, about concepts," he said in a telephone interview earlier this month.

LETTERS

Debt relief to boost economy

To the Editor:

APPRECIATION was widely expressed as U.S. President Bill Clinton decided to sign into law a congressional bill allowing the U.S. administration to cancel all of Jordan's debt to the United States. This debt was estimated to be at around \$450 million. The debt relief is certainly going to be reflected positively on Jordan's economy.

If not realised now, the long-run positive consequences of the cancellation of the debts are surely going to be experienced.

Cancelling Jordan's debt will decrease its foreign obligations and will improve its monetary status, especially in the eyes of investors who prefer investing their money in a country that enjoys economic stability and growth.

One important feature that can be achieved through this cancellation of debt is the saving of foreign currency, which could have been used to service the debt. In this case, the interest payments can be allocated efficiently by using it in projects that can boost the Jordanian economy.

More debt causes interest costs to rise relative to revenues. As a result, people will become increasingly fearful that the government might restore to "printing" money in an effort to escape its loan obligations. This fear of rapid money growth and inflation would push interest rates up and make it even more difficult for the government to meet its debt obligations. If sufficiently capital market. And if the government did resort to "printing press" money in order to pay off its debt would result. The economy would be severely crippled.

In conclusion, being indebted is an obstacle in the face of relief is important for the continuation of development

Seren Shahin,
McGill University.

Features

Peace for sale: A group of mercenaries is doing the job of the United Nations by helping to settle the continent's bush wars

THE BOEING 707 took off before dawn from Johannesburg last week and flew to Sierra Leone via Angola. The flight did not appear on any international schedule; at Freetown, no customs or immigration officials appeared to check papers.

The passengers — South African mercenaries and a handful of British businessmen — simply disembarked on the tarmac, boarded an enormous military helicopter and were ferried across the mile-wide Sierra Leone River to the government's army headquarters.

Executive Outcomes, the private South African army which has been hired by Sierra Leone to help crush the rebel Revolutionary United Front, operates beyond bureaucrats, beyond ideology. "At the end of the day we're a business," explained one of its directors, Lafras Luitingh.

The expertise of the business is fighting bush wars in Africa, but the firm has diversified. It has secured diamond concessions as payment for services rendered in Sierra Leone; it mines gold in Uganda; drills boreholes in Ethiopia; and has a variety of business interests in south Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Lesotho and Angola. It operates a network of 32 companies, its businesses ranging from computer software to adult education.

Executive Outcomes is Africa's new-wave entrepreneur, recolonising parts of the continent where war and the erosion of the nation state have resulted in a collapse of law and order.

Before going to Sierra Leone, the business was credited with turning round the civil war in Angola, in return for \$40 million from the government. This was piquant; most of the mercenaries hired by Executive Outcomes had fought for the Angolan rebels of Unita during the apartheid years.

By last November, Unita had been beaten to its knees: Executive Outcomes was involved in driving it from the oil area of Soyo, the diamond regions around Cafunfo, and from its urban strongholds.

Back in the new South Africa, the organisation is viewed with official disapproval. But when the first 30 South African mercenaries arrived in Freetown last May, they were hailed as saviours in the streets of this dilapidated tropical capital.

The rebels were 12 miles from the city, which had been bracing for the fall since Christmas. A detachment of Gurkhas had failed to halt the advance. The paranoia was heightened by fears of a repeat of the crazy bloodshed in neighbouring Liberia. Freetown was in the hands of "the boys" — a group of army officers in their late twenties who inherited the government in



A white S. African officer trains black mercenaries for the ever-expanding bush war business

Africa's diamond dogs of war

A private South African army, a business beyond ideology, has been hired

by Sierra Leone to crush the rebel Revolutionary United Front. Phillip Van

Niekerk in Freetown sees Executive Outcomes at work

1992 when President Joseph Momoh fled to Guinea, having mistaken a disgruntled delegation of soldiers complaining about pay for a coup.

In public posters, Captain Valeoone Strasser, 29, chairman of the Provisional Ruling Council, looks ridiculously under-age to be in the army, never mind head of state.

Executive Outcomes went as Strasser's government with an offer it couldn't refuse. "We said: 'you're in deep shit.' They said they couldn't pay. We said they could pay us when they could afford it."

Within weeks, the South Africans trained 150 elite troops and freed the approaches to Freetown — and then recaptured the diamond fields in the Kono district.

In an interview with The Observer, Mr. Strasser credited the "remarkable" turnaround in the war to Executive Outcomes. "We've had a number of

successes," said Mr. Strasser, a shy man whose desk is filled with diplomatic gifts such as Oriental dolls. "They were so close to the capital — but now the security situation is improving."

As in Angola, Executive Outcomes denies it has any role in actual combat. The most Mr. Luitingh will admit is that "you can't do battle guidance or planning if you sit hundreds of kilometres away. You need to be at the sharp edge."

And when speaking to them, there is no doubt that Executive Outcomes' black soldiers — about 70 per cent of the mercenary force — have been engaged in combat. The newcomers include Angolans and South Africans from the most infamous and toughest units of the old South African Defence Force.

What is also beyond dispute is that the South Africans — who handle intelligence, logistics, com-

munications, training and planning — have made all the difference between a fighting force and an ill-disciplined band.

But it is still too early to conclude that the war is over. The rebels continue to attack convoys on the road east to the cities of Bo and Kenema, where starvation is growing. Few days ago, a convoy of 75 trucks carrying food from Freetown to the interior was ambushed on the road to Bo. Government troops fled leaving the civilian drivers to be massacred.

The South Africans were not there, and complained their advice had not been heeded. But suspicions that the rebels had been tipped off in Freetown highlighted another problem: who are rebels and who are government troops? Many believe there is only a superficial difference.

Ordinary Sierra Leoneans are more trusting of the white South Africans than of their own army.

They want one thing — peace. Almost a quarter of the population has been uprooted by the war, at least 50,000 slaughtered since 1992.

At the same time, the Sierra Leone leadership realises that in the dense African bush there can be no final military solution, that it cannot kill all the rebels. It wants to weaken the RUF sufficiently to force it to negotiate, a repeat of the scenario in Angola where Unita's Jonas Savimbi capitulated last November.

The government has invited the rebels to a political conference to discuss democratic elections — it is confident that Mr. Strasser still plans to transfer power back to elected civilian rule in January. He says he will quit politics as soon as this happens.

Since 1992 my major preoccupation has been to see an end to the security crisis... We need to re-establish confidence in the

economy and rebuild roads and infrastructure.

Brigadier Julius Maada Bio, the chief of defence staff and Mr. Strasser's number two, told The Observer that the only lasting solution could flow from talking. "If he (the rebel leader Foday Sankoh) is pushed into a corner he will realise that it's useless to continue fighting."

Despite Executive Outcomes' successes, there are lingering, uneasy questions in the minds of educated Sierra Leoneans: If the government is not paying the organisation, to whom is it accountable?

The smart money in Freetown is on the other South African outfit, De Beers, which holds the country's lucrative offshore diamond concessions.

But Mr. De Beers has tried to put as much distance as possible between itself and Executive Outcomes, and privately refers to it as a "bunch of band-

its." "We can play a helluva important role in Africa, protests Mr. Luitingh, who claims his business is misunderstood. "We can bring development to the remotest places. We're trying to aid growth and democracy by bringing stability and foreign investment."

Sierra Leone, though, might not be a pushover. The rebels initially arrived as a spill-over from the war in Liberia, backed by rebel leader Charles Taylor, who objected to Sierra Leone's participation in the West African peacekeeping force that kept him from the presidency of Liberia.

Foday Sankoh, a former army corporal and photographer, is a strong personality, who is unlikely to just fade away. He could as easily escalate the fighting as assent to talks. Though he represents no ideology more sophisticated than a generalised anger against the system, his power to

mobilise young Sierra Leoneans is common to much of Africa, from Chad to Mozambique.

The rebels recruit from an ever-expanding pool of jobless young people, with no stake in the system, defiant of crumbling traditional authority, and whose only route to fortune is what they can loot using an AK-47.

"This is a young people's war," said Father Brian Stareken of the Catholic Development Organisation, who has been in Sierra Leone for 20 years. "They are alienated from a corrupt government and traditional leaders."

In a region threatened by anarchy, it is not hard to see whose interests are best served by Executive Outcomes' intervention — the multinational owners of the mines in both mineral-rich Angola and Sierra Leone.

The organisation is now helping to administer and guard Kono as a pocket of peace in a country that is going back to the bush. Lebanese diamond dealers and traders, who fled from the rebels, have gone back to restart their lives and businesses. An offensive to clear rebels from the titanium and bauxite mines is about to get under way, as the next phase of the war.

Executive Outcomes argues that after the debacle of the U.S. and U.N. interventions in Somalia — and with Bosnia pre-occupying the West — the world is not too interested in little wars in Africa.

Neighbouring Liberia is a prime example of a country being abandoned to its fate. But a few hundred highly trained soldiers are returning Sierra Leone to a semblance of order.

Alan Paterson, a British consultant with decades of experience of mining in West Africa, says the stability provided by the Executive Outcomes is all important. His British clients have agreed to invest \$11 million in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Paterson, who was once managing director of the Sierra Leone diamond company, saw Kono two weeks ago and was horrified: "I saw human skulls blackened by the sun and rain. What right does any human being have to do that? Unless this business is sorted out in Sierra Leone, it is not disconnected to Liberia, it will spread to Guinea. The world should wake up to what's going on and support a government struggling to survive in a decent way."

In line with this argument, Mr. Luitingh, with a mysterious glint in his eye, hints at a potential next destination in Africa. "If Sierra Leone is to be stable, Liberia needs to be stable as well."

"If we can stabilise South, East and West Africa, it's going to be so much better for the whole continent. We are the only people on this planet willing to do it."

The Observer.

Jordan, S. Arabia edge closer

(Continued from page 1)

this year in what was seen as the first tangible step towards the improvement of ties between Amman and Riyadh. Prince Saud, stressing the importance of achieving Arab solidarity, said Jordan and Saudi Arabia could play an important role in realising closer Arab coordination and cooperation.

Before Mr. Kabariti's visit to Saudi Arabia, some members of the Lower House of Parliament, who were concerned about the repercussions of Jordan's offer of a safe haven to Gen. Hassan, warned that the improvement

of ties with Saudi Arabia should not come at the expense of ties with Iraq. The government rejected the suggestions, saying it seeks good ties with all Arab states and stressing that its concern is for the well-being of the Iraqi people.

As Saudi Radio appears ready to turn a new page in its ties with the Kingdom, Kuwait has also indicated its willingness to restore ties with Jordan (see separate story).

Jordan's ties with the rest of the other Arab Gulf countries, which isolated Jordan to varying degrees after the Gulf war, have witnessed

clear improvement over the last year.

The Kingdom's decision to host Gen. Hassan is believed to have accelerated the process of healing the rift with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Observers said the United States has stepped up its efforts to achieve Jordanian-Saudi rapprochement in light of the developments on the Iraqi scene. But they say that these efforts are motivated by more than just wanting to improve ties between two of its strongest allies in the region.

What the U.S. hopes to achieve through burying the hatchet between Riyadh and Amman, they say, is further isolation of the Iraqi regime.

Croats squeeze Serb strongholds

(Continued from page 1)

Thursday's meeting with Mr. Milosevic: "Today's talks were extremely useful. They were very frank and they clarified some issues."

Mr. Milosevic is accused by the West of fuelling the ethnic wars which have torn Yugoslavia apart since 1991. But his priority now seems to be an end to U.N. sanctions which are crippling the Serbian economy.

Washington says the Croatian offensive in Krajina, which drove more than 150,000 Croatian Serbs from their homes, might provide an opportunity for reaching

an overall peace settlement. Diplomats say a Croatian offensive near Dubrovnik would probably not derail the American initiative.

The U.S. proposals mix land swapping deals in Bosnia with incentives and threats of military force to enforce the plan.

One idea was for the Muslim-led government in Bosnia to abandon the enclave of Gorazde in the east to the Serb separatists.

Mr. Izetbegovic has staunchly rejected this. But the United Nations said on Friday that most U.N. troops in the enclave would be pulled out by the middle of

September, leaving only a skeleton force.

Gorazde will now be protected by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) air power, the U.N. said.

"The Ukrainians are definitely coming out and the British are scheduled to come out in about three weeks," said a U.N. source in the Bosnian capital.

Gorazde, a U.N. "safe area," is the sole Muslim enclave remaining in eastern Bosnia after Srebrenica and Zepa were overrun by Serb forces in July.

Several cases of summary executions have been discovered in the Krajina region recently captured from rebel

Croatian Serbs, the United Nations reported.

"On the 16th of August, the U.N. discovered four dead bodies in the village of Zagovic," U.N. spokesman Christopher Gunness said, adding that two had bullet wounds to the head. While denouncing the killings, Mr. Gunness refrained from implicating Croatian forces.

Two bodies were "dressed in underwear," he said. On one, the "right hand appeared to have been mutilated. Several fingers had been cut off."

"Away from the road there were two others corpses, one of a man about 50 years old, who was found lying outside his house, wrapped in a blanket with a bullet hole blasted in the back of his head," Mr. Gunness said. "The fourth corpse was in two advanced stages of decomposition to allow the cause of death to be determined."

The U.N. spokesman also reported the discovery of what appeared to be mass graves at a Knin cemetery.

When U.N. civilian police were authorised to take the bodies to the cemetery in Knin, the former "capital" of the breakaway Croatian Serbs, they discovered "96 crosses that have been placed in opposite sides of four raised, flat top mounds," he said.

"The crosses are very close to one another and there are no individual mounds. Twenty crosses bear names. Despite the authorities' evident effort in preparing the site, the area gives the impression of a mass grave."

When a civilian police team attempted to investigate another suspected gravesite, they were fired on by a sniper, Mr. Gunness said. "The team had counted 22 new graves. Some were marked with crosses. Five bore names."

U.N. civil police "have also reported three more bodies, including one of a middle aged man in civilian dress lying in front of a burned house in Zverinac," Mr. Gunness said.

The army said the site would be closed from Sunday evening until next Thursday at noon. No further explanation was given.

UAE coffers reel under high spending and low oil price

ABU DHABI (AFP) — High government spending coupled with weak oil prices have put strong pressure on the United Arab Emirates (UAE) coffers, official figures have showed.

The country's budget has suffered from a persistent large deficit despite attempts to diversify sources of income, the figures showed. Since 1990, the deficit in the Gulf country's consolidated accounts, which comprise the federal and local budgets, have run at around 10 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), one of the highest levels in the world.

"There appears to be clear evidence that the UAE economy has been running a considerable fiscal deficit in the neighbourhood of 10 per cent of the GDP in its accounts," the state-run Emirates Industrial Bank (EIB) said.

"There are very few countries in the world that have

run a deficit of this magnitude on a sustained basis," the EIB added.

Figures by EIB and the central bank showed the deficit stood at nearly 15.9 billion dirhams (\$4.33 billion) in 1994 compared with 16.1 billion dirhams (\$4.38 billion) in 1993.

In the previous three years, the budget also suffered from a cumulative shortfall of 29.2 billion dirhams (\$7.95 billion).

The figures showed the deficit persisted because of a decline in oil earnings and failure by the government to trim expenditure.

From around 48.7 billion dirhams (\$13.26 billion) in 1991, total revenues plunged to 38.6 billion dirhams (\$10.5 billion) in 1994. Oil income declined from 35.6 billion dirhams (\$9.7 billion) to 29.9 billion dirhams (\$8.14 billion) in the same period.

Expenditure remained as high as 54.5 billion dirhams (\$14.8 billion) in 1994, almost

equivalent to spending in previous years.

"Spending has remained high as the government is committed to meeting growing developing and military needs," a UAE bank manager told AFP.

EIB figures showed development spending, including financial aid to developing nations, accounted for nearly a third of the total expenditure in the past four years. It stood at 16.5 billion dirhams (\$4.49 billion) in 1994 and as high as 25.8 billion dirhams (\$7 billion) in 1991.

No official figures were available on military spending, but the UAE has been locked in a programme to bolster its armed forces since the Gulf war.

Unlike other Gulf oil producers, the UAE has not resorted to issuing bonds or seeking loans from international markets to shore up the budget deficit. Instead, it has opted for borrowing from

its national banks, with credits totalling around 12.6 billion dirhams (\$3.43 billion) in 1994.

The UAE, a federation of seven emirates, produces around 2.16 million barrels per day of oil, of which 40 per cent is owned by Japanese, French and other foreign partners under production-sharing agreements.

Weak crude prices have forced it to seek other income sources, introducing new fees on government services and raising them on existing services. It has also launched a campaign to expand its non-oil industries and is planning to boost gas exports and set up petrochemical projects.

The federal budget, which is financed by half the income of each of the country's seven emirates, has also suffered deficits because of low oil prices. But in some years, the shortfall was turned into a surplus due to higher contributions by some emirates and cuts in actual spending.

Sudan begins to pay off regional bank debts

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan has started to pay off outstanding debts to regional banks and funds in Africa and the Middle East, the minister of state for finance was quoted as saying.

The government-owned Al Sudan Al Hadith quoted Mohammad Khair Al Zubeir as saying his country had paid off delayed instalments to institutions including the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank and the African Development Bank.

Mr. Zubeir described the repayments as positive steps, which would improve ties between these institutions and Sudan, which has an external debt of more than \$15 billion.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), owed around \$1.7 billion by Sudan, has considered expelling it for its inability to repay the debts. Khartoum says it is now paying monthly instalments and carrying out IMF-backed reforms.

The minister said relations with the African Development Bank had returned to normal since last May, enabling Sudan to draw loans worth \$35 million for sugar growing, irrigation and petroleum projects.

Mr. Zubeir also mentioned a new initiative to remedy Sudan's arrears with the Arab Monetary Fund and Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development. He gave no details, but said relations with them were improving.

Sudan, the largest country in Africa but also one of its poorest, faces additional financial burdens caused by a 12-year civil war in the south and by occasional drought.

Kuwait assembly approves debt rescue amid protest

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait's parliament has given final approval to measures to ease repayment terms on \$20 billion owed by some of the Gulf country's richest people.

The chamber voted 37 to 14 in favour of a bill softening repayment terms for thousands of debtors including government officials and merchants whose bad loans are equivalent to 90 per cent of gross domestic product.

Opposition deputies attacked the bill — officially aimed at solving the country's most intractable economic problem — as a measure to help the rich get richer at state expense.

Islamist Ahmad Baqer said he feared the debt would now never be paid because the vote had set a precedent of easing repayment terms and even easier terms would be proposed in years to come.

"I fear that within a year or two this (draft) law is going to be eroded and public funds will be harmed," Sheikh Baqer said.

"I ask the prime minister (Sheikh Saad Al Sabah), and anyone from the government, to make a definitive statement tomorrow that there will be no more amendments," said opposition MP Mishari Al Osaibi in emotional scenes after the final

vote.

The longstanding debt, which confounded repeated attempts at a solution in the 1980s, derives from the spectacular 1982 crash of an unofficial stock exchange and from commercial losses caused by Iraq's 1990-91 occupation.

Previous debt settlement plans foundered amid lobbying from influential corporate and individual borrowers.

Diplomats say one state official owes between 210 million and 230 million dinars (\$700 million to 766 million). An official list of debtors names has never been published.

The bill softens repayment terms set by a 1993 law on the same subject. The bill in effect gives debtors who chose a cash settlement option another five years to complete their payments, weeks before a deadline set by the previous bill for them to pay back about 2.3 billion dinars (\$7.6 billion) of their loans.

The bill now goes for ratification by the emir.

The 1993 bill had set Sept. 6, 1995 as the deadline for debtors choosing cash settlement — an option that was taken by debtors owing most of the debt.

Under the bill, the 2.3 bil-

lion would be paid in five equal annual instalments with the first tranche to be paid by Dec. 6, 1995. The first instalment would be interest free. The four subsequent ones, would be subject to interest at rates to be set by the central bank.

The debt is owed to the government, which bought out commercial banks' holdings of the dubious loans in 1992.

Opposition MPs have said the bill would add more than 800 million dinars (\$2.6 billion) — equivalent to half the annual state budget deficit — to the costs to the public purse of operating the debt programme.

The government says its plan would add 240 million dinars (\$800 million) in costs to public funds.

Apart from forgiving billions of dinars of original debt, the state already pays out hundreds of millions of dinars annually in interest to commercial banks on government bonds it issued to them in the 1992 debt buyout.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, AUGUST 19, 1995
By Thomas S. Pierson,
Astrologer, Carroll Flighter
Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You are able to get the support you need for important projects from good friends who have the means. Then get busy later on at those tasks ahead of you and complete them quickly.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Contact individuals who will help you make your property more valuable and comfortable. See how to add to present income appreciably in an ethical fashion. Spend tonight with friends.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Talking over some problems with a person who thinks differently from you this morning will help you solve them quickly. Kin help you with some task that is most boring for you.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) If you waste too much time worrying about a problem this morning, you are not going to accomplish very much, so toss it aside for now. Tomorrow the right solution comes to you.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Talk over that new project with a friend and then see about getting the financial backing you need for it this evening. Forget social life, since little or nothing would come of it.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Study that public problem well before you try to handle it today. Show that you are not a superficial person. Others are depending on you to get the work done well and without fail.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You have inspired ideas about how to put new life into old projects that will make them successful instead of discouraging failures. Information from one overseas can be helpful.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Plans must be well worked out today if you want to handle responsibilities satisfactorily. Don't rely on advisors since they are busy. Come to your own conclusions.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Pay attention to the ideas of an associate and do not look to big wigs to do more for you. Spend this evening with people who have the same mind set as you and can lend a hand.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) This is an ideal day to attend to tasks that only you can handle properly and do so in a clever and ingenious way, expressing some particular talent that you have is also good.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) A romantic interest has some rather strange ideas today, so smile them away and do not break up the relationship. Tomorrow they will most likely be forgotten.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You had better cooperate with what family has in mind or you can certainly be the loser as well as they. Ridding yourself of the cause of tensions at home would be wise this evening.

Birthstone of August: Peridot — Golden Quartz

Growth for gold demand expected to stay strong in Arab Gulf states

DUBAI (R) — Growth in gold demand for gold in the second half of 1995 is likely to match or exceed the healthy 10 per cent increase in the first six months of this year, the World Gold Council (WGC) has said.

"We expect at least a similar increase for the second half as all (Gulf) economic indicators have improved dramatically," WGC regional chief executive Rolf Schneebeli told Reuters.

WGC figures show demand in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) rose 10 per cent in the first half to 119.2 tonnes from 108.7 tonnes in the first six months of last year.

"Saudi's fiscal position is continuing to improve and we see continued and accelerating economic growth in the UAE," he said.

The Geneva-based WGC, owned by major gold producers worldwide, monitors about 75 per cent of the world's markets.

Mr. Schneebeli said Saudi gold demand rose 13 per cent in the first half to 99 tonnes from 87.3 in the same period last year, thanks partly to strong sales during the Mus-

lim Hajj pilgrimage.

"The overall gold demand in Saudi was boosted by better than expected gold sales during the Hajj season. Trade indications are that the level of gold business in the 1995 Hajj season (in April and May) was about 15 per cent more than that of 1994," he said.

Every year more than two million people flock to Islam's holy sites in Saudi Arabia to perform the rights of pilgrimage.

Mr. Schneebeli said an im-

provement in the financial position of the kingdom, strapped for cash in the past few years due to weak oil prices and huge costs related to the Gulf war, had also helped lift demand.

"The generally better trend in gold sales also reflects an easier fiscal position, as oil prices during the first half of 1995 were about \$2 above budgeted estimates," he said.

In the UAE, and in particular Dubai — a world trading and reexport centre for

gold, demand rose strongly towards the end of the first half and during July.

"The trade estimates show a 30 per cent growth in sales of gold jewellery from the middle of May to the end of July... In 1995 the expatriate summer vacation take-home purchase has been much better in... July as compared to July 1994," he said.

Many of the UAE's expatriate population, which accounts for about 75 per cent of a total of around two million, are Indians, who are big gold buyers. India is the single largest gold market in the world, consuming 235.1 tonnes in the first half.

IMF praises Georgia

TBILISI (AFP) — A delegation from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), concluding a two-week visit to Georgia, has hailed the ex-Soviet republic's progress toward economic reform.

"Georgia has come a tremendous way in the last 12 months — it's almost unbelievable," Mohammad Shadman-Valavi, head of the IMF delegation, said.

He added that his delegation would recommend that the IMF executive board approve the next tranche of

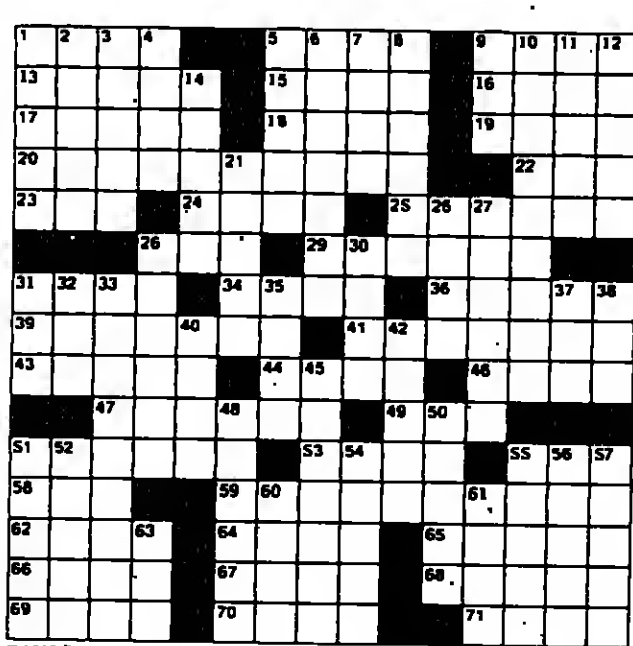
its stand-by loan to Georgia. This year, Georgia has stamped out hyper-inflation, freed most prices, set up an independent central bank and launched an ambitious programme of mass privatisation.

Industrial decline, among the severest in the post-socialist world, may not have ended. But several sectors seem to have turned the corner and are in line to see growth, Mr. Shadman-Valavi said.

THE Daily Crossword by William Canline

ACROSS

- 1 Mince
- 5 Charity
- 9 Petty quarrel
- 13 Underworld god
- 15 Heartfelt
- 16 Goddess of youth
- 17 Vanguard
- 18 Marquand sleuth
- 19 Pre-med course abbr.
- 20 Cold rush
- 21 Participant
- 22 Cpl
- 23 Amazement
- 24 French novelist
- 25 Alarm signal
- 28 — volente
- 29 Inner decay
- 31 Competent
- 34 Just average
- 36 Restrain
- 39 More brawny
- 41 Broadcast
- 43 Devoured
- 44 Plane surface
- 46 Difficult to pin down



Thursday's puzzle solved

- 47 Snarl
- 49 160
- 51 Feared insect
- 53 Ariene or Roald
- 55 Farrow of limbs
- 58 Paddle
- 59 America's Cup champ
- 62 Catamount
- 64 Put forth
- 65 Tropical fruit
- 66 Hebrew month
- 67 Creeper
- 68 Fur merchant
- 69 Metallic element
- 70 Actor Baldwin
- 71 Execrate

- 8 Casual in style
- 9 — Na Na
- 10 Rose Bowl champ
- 11 Calculators
- 12 Montana river
- 14 Elegance
- 21 Loop
- 26 Killer whale
- 27 External layer
- 28 Loss
- 30 Pete or Billy
- 31 TV's Vigoda
- 32 TV's Arthur
- 33 TV's David
- 35 Spoken
- 37 Ferrer or Gibson
- 38 Snoop
- 40 Stopovers for travelers
- 42 Store of hidden goods



- 1 Former labor leader
- 2 Missile
- 3 Goal
- 4 Pursue game
- 5 Let in
- 6 Meteor shower members
- 7 Apportion

- 45 Claret or chianti
- 48 Swiss city
- 50 Beast of burden
- 51 Tropical hummingbird
- 52 King Fahd, for one
- 54 Victim of cones
- 55 Ray
- 56 Metal lump

- 57 Reverse
- 60 Jennings of old times
- 61 Switch
- 63 Bow

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"I had one boyfriend who was a very talented kisser. He knew how to breathe through his ears!"

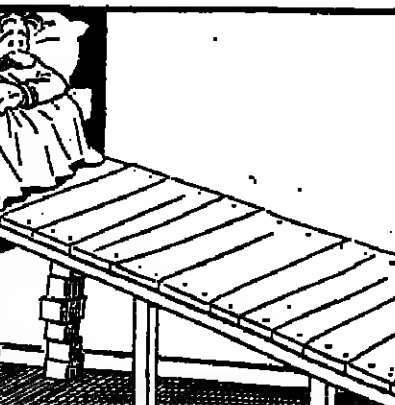
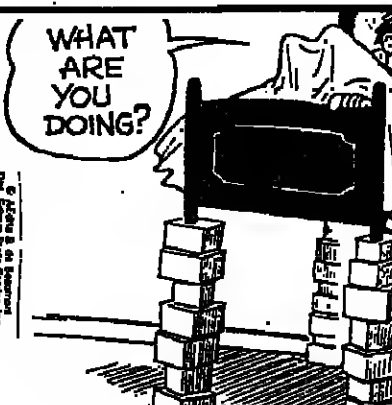
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n' Jeff



Amman Financial Market weathers fears over Iraq

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Turnover at the Jordanian stock exchange rose by more than two thirds this week and prices edged up slightly despite political uncertainties over Iraq, one of the main markets for Jordanian products, following the defection of a high-ranking Iraqi official, brokers said.

They said, however, that the market remained largely upbeat amid signs that Parliament was nearing endorsement of several key economy-related laws that would liberalise the Kingdom's trade and investment policies.

Also contributing to the optimistic mood in the market were reports that a new law on the stock market, the Amman Financial Market (AFM), as it is officially known, would open the door wide for foreign firms to come without bureaucratic delays.

The weekly report of the market said turnover for the week ending Thursday was 4.5 million Jordanian dinars (\$6.3 million), up 73 per cent from the previous week's 2.6 million dinars (\$3.6 million). Strong movements in Arab Bank stocks, which weights heavily in the market, accounted for nearly one third of the turnover.

The report said 2.2 million shares changed hands under 2,896 contracts during the week, and the average daily trading for the week was 900,000 dinars — five days of trading — compared with 700,000 dinars in the previous week, when the market opened for only four days because of a public holiday.

Industrial stock accounted for 2.8 million dinars, or 46.3 per cent, of the weekly volume, followed by commercial banks with 1.44 million dinars, or 32.1 per cent, the services sectors 930,000 dinars, or 20.7 per cent, and insurance firms with 40,000 dinars or 0.9 per cent.

The official AFM share price index based on 60 major companies from among the 120 listed in the market closed at 155.54 points, up 0.9 points — 0.6 per cent — for the week.

Commercial bank shares gained 1.6 per cent and services sector stocks closed 0.05 per cent higher. Insurance stocks shed 0.9 per cent and industrial shares dipped by 1.1 per cent.

The AFM report said stocks of 89 companies were traded during the week, with 24 of them gaining, 52 closing with losses and the rest 131 remaining unchanged.

Brokers said the defection to Jordan last week of two daughters of President Saddam Hussein along with their

husbands, one of them a minister and close confidant of the president, had a strong impact on the market in the first two days of this week, when companies with strong export links to Iraq suffered in the stock market.

"But as it appeared that the incident would not necessarily affect Jordanian-Iraqi relations, the situation slowly stabilised," said a broker, who, like other AFM dealers, cannot be identified by name under standing regulation.

However, skepticism con-

tinued to influence the market, said the broker.

"People are waiting to see how the defections are going to pan out," according to the broker.

At the same time, speculators also took advantage of the debate in parliament on economy-related laws, including a liberal investment promotion law, a new companies law and an income tax law, that are seen as key to Jordan's efforts to attract foreign investment.

Another factor that influ-

enced the market was "leak" that a new draft law on the workings of the AFM would allow foreign firms to enter the bourse with minimum limitations on trading and transfer of capital and profits.

"Local investors are fed up with similar faces," said another AFM dealer. "The would like to see foreign money coming into the market. Once prospects of foreign capital show themselves well, there will be massive local interest."

business daily beat
A review of economic news from the Arabic press

APC chief outlines future plans

ARAB POTASH COMPANY (APC) Chairman Ali Ensour expects potash sales to reach \$160 million this year. Addressing members of the Amman Rotary Club, Mr. Ensour said the company would soon be announcing tenders to set up a plant to produce "pure industrial potash." He added that it was probably to complement this drive by entering into some of these secondary industries, such as potassium carbonate and potassium hydroxide, by the beginning of next century.

Mr. Ensour said that other plans include expanding the areas of salt pans. Expected for completion in 1997, the expansion would provide additional raw materials to produce about two million tonnes of potash. Another industry to be carried out with the participation of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company, the Social Security Corporation, the Jordan Investment Corporation and other investors, aims at producing industrial salt and table salt in 1996. With about 14 million tonnes of sodium chloride (table salt) sedimenting annually at the potash pans, the project entails refining a portion of this salt at a cost of \$20 million and exporting 1.2 million tonnes of it for industrial uses while marketing 31,000 tonnes locally and in Arab markets as pure table salt.

The APC chief revealed that an experimental plant to produce magnesium oxide had been recently completed and he expected to begin implementing this project in early 1996. Noting that magnesium oxide is used in manufacturing fire bricks at steel furnaces, Mr. Ensour said the Jordanian product would be of high standard due to the good quality of magnesium salt and limestone available at the potash pans and in the area. He said that latest studies pointed out that the project would be extremely feasible and that production of 50,000 tonnes of magnesium oxide and about 10,000 tonnes of other magnesium products each year, is expected by 1999, at a cost of \$90 million.

Studies have also showed excellent feasibility to set a project to produce 50,000 tonnes of bromine and other related derivatives. The APC head said, adding that diversification was still going on with foreign parties on obtaining the complicated technology and the necessary market for this industry which requires a \$150 million investment.

Another promising project that would complement the fertiliser industry in Jordan would be a potassium sulphate and calcium bi-phosphate scheme. Mr. Ensour said. He explained that this project aims at producing 75,000 tonnes a year of potassium sulphate fertiliser widely used in the Arab region from locally-available raw materials of potassium and sulphuric acid. From the chemical reaction of these two products hydrochloric acid is produced and can be twined into calcium bi-phosphate, used in fodder. The project, to be announced in a tender later this year, is expected to cost \$75 million and to start production in 1999.

Future projects also include producing 300,000 tonnes of compound fertiliser for export to the Japanese market by using locally-available raw material and ammonia to be imported from Arab Gulf countries. This Jordanian-Japanese joint venture, is expected to begin production in 1997.

Mr. Ensour described the fertiliser sector as being the largest of Jordan's industrial structure and as being the basic economic engine that attracts local and foreign investments.

He noted that the fertiliser sector accounts for 50 per cent of all Jordan's exports of goods and for 10 per cent of the gross domestic product (AI Aswag)

U.S. ambassador says Mideast bank consensus near

RABAT (R) — The U.S. ambassador to Morocco says Washington hopes a political decision will be reached on the shape of a \$5 billion Middle East bank to finance projects in the region before an October economic summit in Amman.

Mr. Ginsberg told reporters Thursday that the establishment of a charter for the proposed bank still faced hurdles although there had been progress after a series of negotiations among potential donors.

"Consensus on how the bank should be funded has to be developed but there is now consensus on how it should work," Mr. Ginsberg said.

"There has been opposition. Germany has strong opposition to this bank... but we believe a consensus is evolving to have this bank established. We hope to reach a political agreement before the Amman summit," he added.

Mr. Ginsberg said Germany was worried about the size of the contribution it would be asked to make. Other European countries have argued that there are enough lending bodies serving the region.

"America is determined to push forward to get consensus before Amman to get the new bank, notwithstanding

reasonable questions," Mr. Ginsberg said.

Washington, backed by Israel and most of its Arab neighbours, has supported the creation of a bank to finance projects on a regional level. Oil-producing Arab Gulf states objected initially, fearing they would be asked to contribute the lion's share of funds that would benefit Israel more than the Arabs.

Mr. Ginsberg said the bank

would give preference to funding infrastructure projects in Palestinian self-rule areas.

A committee set up at the Casablanca summit and comprising the United States, Russia, the European Union, Japan, Canada, Egypt, the Palestinian Authority, Morocco, Tunis and Israel will meet in Madrid on Sept. 14 to finalise the bank's charter.

Casino du Liban to get a multi-million dollar facelift

BEIRUT (AFP) — British, Italian, Saudi and Lebanese firms are investigating \$35 million into the restoration of the war-battered Casino du Liban, where renovations were officially launched Friday.

Officials here hope that the reopening of the casino in the first half of 1996 will contribute to a nationwide effort to revive the Lebanese economy and tourism, which bore the brunt of the 1975-1990 civil war.

Casino du Liban chairman Habib Lteif believes the casino will once again be the meeting place of the international jet-set and attract thousands of tourists, including Israelis, in an era of Arab-Israeli peace.

The casino was inaugurated in 1959 following a decision by the late President Camille Chamoun to ban gambling in hotels throughout the country and grant it the monopoly.

With its numerous gaming rooms and concert halls it soon became one of the most prestigious casinos in the Middle East and a favourite spot for tourists who came as far away as Japan and the United States.

Lebanese President Elias Hrawi inaugurated Friday work on the casino overlooking the bay of Mameleh, in a Christian area of Lebanon 30 kilometres north of Beirut.

The facelift will involve refurbishing and expanding the casino's gaming rooms, concert halls and six restaurants as well as building a luxury hotel with a 100-150 bed capacity and a 600-place car park.

The consortium chosen for the work includes the Lebanese-Saudi-Italian company al Mabani, Italy's Impregilo General Contractors Co. and the Anglo-Lebanese group London Club International-Albert Abela.

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Financial Markets			
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U.S. Dollar in International Markets			
Currency	New York Close 18/8/95	Tokyo Close 17/8/95	
Sterling Pound	1.5425	1.5435**	
Deutsche Mark	1.4798	1.4766	
Swiss Franc	1.2315	1.2335**	
French Franc	5.0587	5.0595**	
Japanese Yen	97.85	97.90	
European Currency Unit	1.5710	1.5673**	

Precious Metals			
Date: 17/8/1995			
Currency	1 MTR	3 MTHS	6 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.64	5.66	5.75
Sterling Pound	6.50	6.62	6.75
Deutsche Mark	4.25	4.25	4.31
Swiss Franc	2.68	2.67	2.87
French Franc	5.94	5.87	5.80
Japanese Yen	0.65	0.62	0.68
European Currency Unit	5.81	5.81	5.81

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin			
Date: 17/8/1995			
Currency	Bid	Offer	
U.S. Dollar	0.7130	0.7150	
Sterling Pound	1.1029	1.1044	
Deutsche Mark	0.4814	0.4838	
Swiss Franc	0.5795	0.5824	
French Franc	0.1407	0.1414	
Japanese Yen	0.7250	0.7295	
Dutch Guilder	0.4303	0.4355	
Swedish Krona	0.0440	0.0445	
Italian Lira	0.0440	0.0445	
Belgian Franc	0.0440	0.0445	

Other Currencies			
Date: 17/8/1995			
Currency	Bid	Offer	
Lebanese Lira	0.045500	0.045700	
Saudi Riyal	0.1896	0.1911	
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.2000	2.3350	
Omani Riyal	0.1944	0.1959	
Egyptian Pound	0.8400	0.8410	
Omani Riyal	1.8430	1.8520	
UAE Dirham	0.1933	0.1944	
Greek Drachma	0.2835	0.2835	
Cypriot Pound	1.5500	1.0380	

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at mid-session on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Friday.

One U.S. dollar	1.3570/80	Canadian dollar	1.4760/70
	1.6520/30	Deutsche marks	1.2230/40
	30.33/37	Dutch guilders	5.0532/82
	1621.22/2	Swiss francs	97.19/29
	7.3350/50	Belgian francs	6.4610/60
	5.7180/30	French francs	5.7180/30
		Italian lire	
		Japanese yen	
		Swedish crowns	
		Norwegian crowns	
		Danish crowns	

One Sterling	1.5448/58	U.S. dollar	
One ounce of gold	\$384.65/\$385.05	U.S. dollars	

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Sautin leads European springboard semifinal qualifiers

VIENNA (Agencies) — World highboard champion Dmitry Sautin led qualifiers into the men's three-metre springboard diving semifinal at the European Swimming Championships on Friday.

Sautin overhauled Italy's Davide Lorenzini with the last of his six voluntary dives, a reverse 1-1/2 somersaults with 3-1/2 twists which earned him 77.22 points, the highest mark of the round.

Sautin, who won the highboard gold and three-metre springboard silver at both the 1993 European and 1994 World Championships, amassed an aggregate 388.05 points.

Court in Lausanne which allowed the 21-year-old swimmer to compete until a decision is reached.

He was fifth in the 200-metre individual medley race at the 1993 European championships.

In Thursday's competition, Claudia Bockner of Germany led after the semifinals of the women's 3-metre springboard. The field was cut to 12 for the Friday's final round.

Also, defending champion Olga Sedakova of Russia held the lead after the technical portion of the solo synchronised swimming event.



Franziska van Almsick

The major focus of the championships will be the swimming events which begin next Tuesday.

Franziska van Almsick, the 17-year-old German, is a favourite in seven freestyle and relay events.

The championships are expected to be a comparison opportunity for European swimmers, measuring their performances against the Americans and Australians at the Pan Pacific Championships last week.

Doping was a major issue at the Pan Pacific, where the Chinese were barred because of the controversy over their training programme and belief by some of a system-wide problem.

Kieren Perkins, the Australian gold medalist and multiple world record-holder speaking in Sydney, Australia, Thursday, called for mandatory testing of all Olympic competitors.

He criticised the international authorities for not doing enough to stop the use of drugs, potentially endangering the future of the sport.

"It is time somebody took a stand because FINA is doing nothing about it," Perkins said.

LEN, the European governing body of swimming, expressing concern about the war situation in the Balkans, decided Wednesday against holding European water polo events in Croatia and Yugoslavia.

In another policy-changing move it allowed the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to participate in the championships. Yugoslavia which was not allowed to compete two years ago in Sheffield, England, has been readmitted.

Officials warn about doping

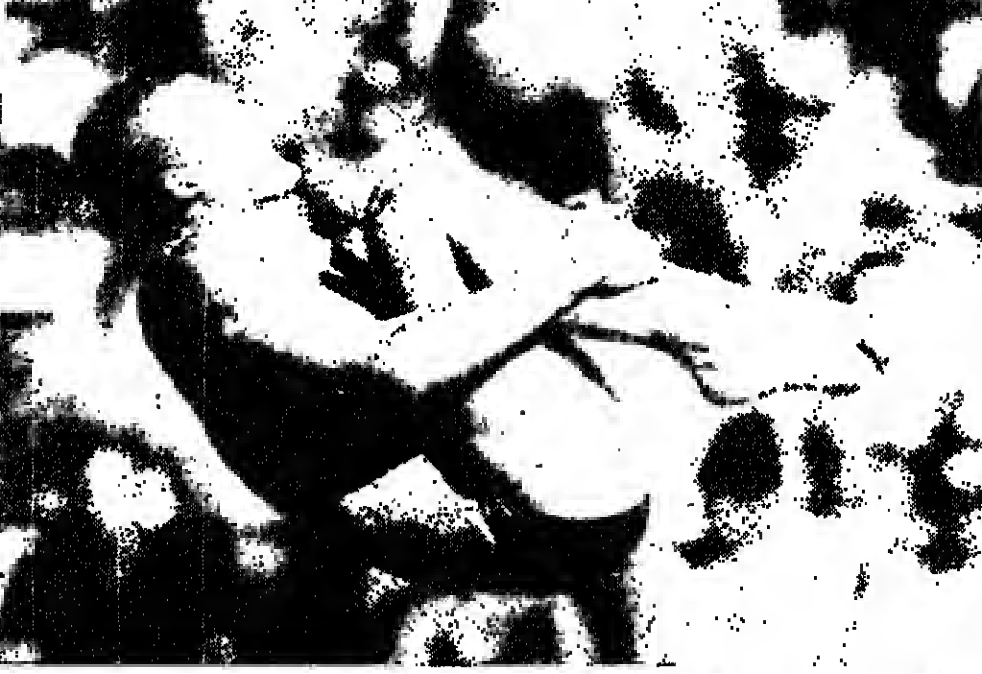
Two doping cases sounded a warning to swimmers at the European Championships.

Anne Chagnaud, the French European title holder in the 25 kilometres was barred from competing in Vienna having tested positive in January this year after a marathon race in Tapes, Brazil.

Chagnaud tested positive for the drug etilefrine and was prohibited from competing for two years in July by FINA, the International Swimming Federation.

The decision was upheld this week in spite of a pardon plea to the IOC Arbitration Court in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Finland's Petteri Lehtinen's two-year ban for testing positive for salbutamol was suspended. The Finn approached the Arbitration



Russian Dmitry Sautin, performing a 3 1/2 three metre springboard diving semifinal somersault, leads qualifiers into the men's (AFP photo)

Curiosity surrounding Tyson carries non-title bout

LAS VEGAS (AP) — It's not a Leonard-Hagler or an Ali-Holmes. As a boxing match, it doesn't even come close to matching the two bouts between Riddick Bowe and Evander Holyfield.

But it is Mike Tyson, and that's reason enough for Saturday's fight with Peter McNeeley to qualify as one of this boxing capital's biggest events.

"Even the people who don't care about boxing are talking about this week," said Marc Ratner, executive director of the Nevada State Athletic Commission. "No one's talking about the fight itself. There's just a big curiosity factor about Mike Tyson."

From the chatter around the sports book windows on the Las Vegas strip to the MGM Grand Hotel, where people mill around hoping for a glimpse of Tyson, there's an aura of excitement in the air for the fight.

The anticipation over Tyson's return is reflected in the celebrity list for the fight, which includes the likes of Hollywood actors Jim Carey, Arnold Schwarzenegger and

Eddie Murphy, American comedian and TV star Jerry Seinfeld and basketball all-star Shaquille O'Neal.

Even the most expensive fight ticket in the city's history — \$1,500 for anything close to ringside — hasn't discouraged hotels from bringing in their high rolling gamblers for the bout.

In the dog days of summer, the fight has given a boost to the city at a time when casino business is generally slow.

"It's an excuse for people to come to town, so they can see Mike Tyson," said one casino executive. "No one really cares about the fight. It's an event, not a fight."

Tickets for the fight were still available Thursday, although the cheapest seats at \$200 each were all sold out.

Hotel officials and promoter Don King were vague on just how many tickets were sold, with Mr. King saying about 1,000 seats remained for sale in the 16,000-seat arena. If the arena sells out, the promotion will realise a \$15 million live gate.

"The ticket prices are absurd," rival promoter Bob

Arum said. "Hagler-Leonard was only \$700 for the best seat. The Tyson-Holyfield fight was \$1,000 and it sold out the first week before it was cancelled."

Tyson's previous comeback, in his first fight after losing the heavyweight title to James "Buster" Douglas, nearly sold out at Caesars Palace with Henry Tillman as his opponent.

"We did very well on that fight," said Caesars executive Rich Rose. "But we had much more reasonable ticket prices."

The pay-per-view television sales in the United States, at prices ranging from \$39.95 to \$49.95 per home, are also expected to be strong, although few believe the fight will top the Foreman-Holyfield bout as the biggest pay-per-view seller in America.

But there's no lack of media interest, with some 1,100 media types credentialed for the bout. About 400 of those will watch the fight from the press room because there is not enough room in the arena for them. Bettors also are interested.

even though Tyson is a huge favourite.

At the sports book at the Mirage hotel-casino, book manager Jimmy Vaccaro said the fight has been the talk of bettors all week.

Tyson is a 17-1 favourite, but bettors can wager on whether or not the fight will last 2 1/2 rounds or on the chances of either Tyson or McNeeley being knocked down in the first round.

"The feeling here is anticipation of him coming back," Mr. Vaccaro said. "It's not like it's a question of whether he's a great fighter, but everyone has their own opinion on how he will look. There is definite interest in this fight."

Mr. Vaccaro said most of the early money has been on McNeeley, but not necessarily because he's given much of a fighter.

"You don't hear anything about whether McNeeley is any good, but whether Tyson still has his timing," Mr. Vaccaro said. "They want to blow their money, but they want to blow it on McNeeley."

Lure of real gold works its magic

ZURICH, Switzerland (AP) — There's nothing like real gold to inspire the stars of track and field.

In a meet featuring an all-star lineup of 23 world champions, distance runners Haile Gebrselassie of Ethiopia and Moses Kiptanui of Kenya smashed world records — and earned \$50,000 and a one-kilo bar of gold in the process.

With the help of painkillers to treat a leg injury that left him sprawling in agony on the track in Goteborg, British Olympic champion Linford Christie staged a remarkable comeback Wednesday night. He won the 100 metres in 10.04 seconds ahead of Canada's Donovan Bailey, the champion in Goteborg.

At the other end of the age-scale, 22-year-old Gebrselassie vowed to go for a 5,000-10,000 double in Atlanta to complement the world records he now holds in both disciplines.

In the most spectacular performance of the Zurich meet, Gebrselassie shattered Kenyan rival Kiptanui's two-month-old 5,000 record by nearly 11 seconds.

But he made it clear that cash was preferable to other incentives offered — like the race horse he was given for his 5,000 world record in Rome two months ago.

"I hear it's getting fat in the stable," he shrugged. "Maybe I'll go out running with it when I get home."

Kiptanui is expected to challenge Nouredine Morceli's 3,000-metre world record of 7:25.11 when the season continues with the Grand Prix meet in Cologne, Germany, on Friday.

Although uncertain for the Britain-vs.-United States competition in Gateshead, England, next Monday, Christie indicated he was still considering taking part in the Brussels "Golden Four" meet next Friday. He won the 100 in Oslo earlier this season.

"I want to go to Gateshead but my priority is to be fit. I'm going to pick and choose my races very carefully," the 35-year-old Christie said, while insisting he wasn't interested in the financial rewards.

"I ran because I want to run. I don't run for money. It's a week too late and at the end of the day Donovan Bailey is the world champion," he said.

Buoyed by his success and the chance to disprove "has-been" newspaper headlines, Christie rolled back from declarations that he would quit competition this year. However, he reiterated that he has no plans to defend his Olympic title in Atlanta next year.

In addition to first-prize money of \$7,000 and record bonuses at the individual meets, winners of any one discipline at all four events share 20 one-kilo gold bars between them. It's a clever marketing ploy which seems to work.

Gebrselassie clocked a sensational 12 minutes, 44.39 seconds — a time which surprised himself as much as anyone else.

Kiptanui immediately vowed to regain the record, but it will be tough.

"Kiptanui is strong. But this record can only be broken by a man, not a machine," Gebrselassie said.

The Ethiopian angered his federation by refusing to race the 5,000 in Goteborg, settling just for the 10,000 to allow him to save his energies for Zurich.

While Kiptanui lost one record, he gained another as he became the first man to break the eight-minute barrier in the 3,000-metre steeplechase with a time of 7:59.18.

Several other world champions are set to compete in Cologne: Bailey, Allen Johnson (110 hurdles), Wilson Kipketer (800) and Derrick Adkins (400 hurdles). Merlene Ottey and Gwen Torrence are expected to clash again in the women's 200.

Massive challenge awaits Schumacher

LONDON (R) — A massive challenge awaits Michael Schumacher at Ferrari next season when he tries to deliver the Italian team's first drivers' world title since 1979.

The German defending world champion acknowledged the size of his task after Ferrari announced on Wednesday he would be joining them from Benetton.

Schumacher, at 26 not only the youngest man to have won the championship but also the first German, will have to succeed where such men as Briton Nigel Mansell and Frenchman Alain Prost have failed.

Mansell eventually returned to Williams to win his solitary world title in 1992, while Prost, after three successes with McLaren, succeeded the Englishman when he won his fourth title with Williams in 1993. Both arrived on a wave of euphoria, but left under a cloud.

"I am sure Damon (Hill) will be the favourite to win the championship next year," said Schumacher at Silverstone during testing with Benetton on Wednesday.

"He will have the best car, but I accept that. For me, the attraction of Ferrari is as much the challenge as it is the traditions and history of the team."



Michael Schumacher

Schumacher's move from Benetton caused many raised eyebrows among the Formula One fraternity. Having won the team's first driver's title in 1994, he seems poised to repeat that success this year and placed in a strong position to go for a potential hat-trick in 1996.

But instead of staying, he seems to have traded his ambitions to win races and championships for the longer-term challenge of re-

living Ferrari and the obvious short-term attraction of a massive financial package.

Some sources have suggested he will earn as much as \$30 million in the first year alone.

Despite his sincerity in explaining that he was moving to Ferrari because of the challenge, most cynics have found it hard to accept any other theory than that which suggests financial considerations have triumphed over sporting ambitions.

Schumacher's background — he is the son of a bricklayer — and his upbringing were characterised by economic prudence at home and in his early racing career and it is certain that he and his manager Willi Weber are delighted to have completed a move to F1's most famous team.

His greatest rival, Britain's Hill, whose 1996 contract at Williams was also confirmed on Wednesday, may not have negotiated as big a pay day as Schumacher but looks assured of starting 1996 as the title favourite.

His team mate at Williams will be Canadian Jacques Villeneuve, this year's winner of the Indianapolis 500 and favourite to win the IndyCar World Series drivers' title, who will replace another Briton, David Coulthard.

Schumacher's place at Benetton will be taken by Frenchman Jean Alesi, who is leaving Ferrari at the end of the year, a move confirmed in the third of the three major announcements on Wednesday.

After five unpredictable years at Ferrari, which have produced only one win so far, Alesi may find the discipline and professionalism of Benetton a more suitable environment for his temperamental talents.

Equipped with a Benetton car powered by the standard-setting Renault V10 engine which has carried Schumacher to such success this year, Alesi should be capable of mounting a serious title challenge. Only Hill, also powered by the Renault V10, appears to have the package and the experience to match him.

Schumacher may find that Ferrari's plans to switch from a V12 engine to a V10 next year will hamper his and the team's initial progress and leave him, like Mansell and Prost, frustrated.

Much may depend on the future decision to be taken by Austrian Gerhard Berger, who has been Alesi's team mate for the last two years.

He is understood to have the choice of staying with the Italian team as Schumacher's partner or moving back to McLaren as the experienced man needed by engine suppliers Mercedes-Benz.

Berger's decision will also affect the future of Coulthard, who could either replace him at Ferrari if local favourite Nicola Larini does not get the job or move to McLaren himself as Finn Mika Hakkinen's team mate if Berger decides to stay.

Top woman mountaineer feared dead with 6 climbers

LONDON (AP) — Hardly resting after becoming the first woman to climb Mount Everest alone and without carrying oxygen, Alison Hargreaves took on a Himalayan peak feared as a killer.

Though fearing the worst, Jim Ballard said Thursday he had not given up hope that his wife survived Sunday's avalanche in which seven climbers were reported missing on K-2, in Pakistan's Karakorum Range.

"We shouldn't grieve," Ballard said. "She was actually where she wanted to be. She had climbed the mountain. She was the first woman to climb Everest and K-2 without supplementary oxygen and she was on her way down."

"At least inside she would

have had the happiness of reaching the summit," he said.

Among the others feared dead were American Rob Slater, Jeff Lakes of Canada, and two Spaniards, said Nazir Sabir, an organiser of one of the expeditions. He said one body had been found but that identities of the missing were not expected until a member of the party reached the mountain town of Skardu, probably on Saturday.

"There are very little details, only that one of the bodies was found near Camp 2 and buried. There was no name or anything," Mr. Sabir said.

U.S. embassy officials in Islamabad confirmed that Slater was missing, along with at least four others.

Mr. Sabir, contacted Wednesday by telephone in Skardu, said five to seven climbers were caught in an avalanche somewhere above the 8,000-metre mark of the 8,560-metre peak.

In May, Hargreaves, 33, entered the record books by reaching the top of the 8,477-metre Everest alone and without carrying oxygen.

She briefly returned to her husband and two small children at their home in Spean Bridge, Scotland, then headed back to "the roof of the world" to tackle K-2. She wanted to go on to the third-highest peak — India's Kanchenjunga — this year.

In a BBC interview shortly before she left, Hargreaves pointed out that K-2's is known as a "killer mountain"

because it attracts very bad storms.

"When we go climbing we obviously minimise the risks and if we thought it was that risky we wouldn't go climbing," she said. "Anybody who went off thinking that there was a very high chance they wouldn't come back — it's a very unfair thing to do especially with a young family."

The only other British woman to have stood on the summit of K-2 was Julie Tullis in 1986, but she did not survive the descent.

"I've been rehearsing this dreadful day for nearly 10 years," Mr. Ballard told BBC Radio. He said he was planning to tell Tom, 6 and Kate, 4, that their mother might not be coming back.

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Sports

Juventus, AC Milan resume bitter rivalry for title

MILAN, Italy (AP) — Defending champion Juventus of Turin and AC Milan may be commercial partners but they are not about to strike any deals over the next Italian league title.

Italy's two most successful and popular clubs recently signed a commercial joint venture for merchandising and television rights, drawing the attention of Italy's anti-trust authority.

But on the field, the clubs will continue their traditional bitter rivalry as the Italian first division season kicks off Aug. 27.

Former Premier Silvio Berlusconi, the TV magnate and AC Milan president, spent about 40 billion lire (\$25 million) to sign new players and strengthen the team which last season lost both its league title and European Champions Cup titles.

With newly acquired Roberto Baggio, Paulo Futre and George Weah teaming up front with Dejan Savicevic and Marco Simone, offensive potential will not be lacking for Milan.

"This is a team built for entertaining the fans with spectacular, offensive play — and for winning the next league title and the UEFA Cup," Mr. Berlusconi said. AC Milan, which finished fourth last season after three consecutive league crowns, lost its berth in the champions cup to Juventus and will compete in the less prestigious UEFA Cup.

Baggio's \$19-million move from Juventus to Milan has been the most expensive transfer of the year.

The World Cup hero, whose career has been slowed by recurrent knee problems, left Juventus reluctantly in a contract dispute. Once at AC Milan, Baggio

quickly proclaimed he had joined "the strongest Italian team which is going to win the next league title."

"Milan's offense is going to cause headaches for all rival defenses," Baggio said.

AC Milan will have to test a new defensive strategy as captain-sweeper Franco Baresi is again and the all-offense tactics favoured by Mr. Berlusconi — not fully shared by coach Fabio Capello — could make Milan's midfield and defense more vulnerable.

Auto tycoon Giovanni Agnelli, who owns Juventus, regretted the departure of Baggio, the player he once called the Raphael of soccer. However, Mr. Agnelli added he expected Baggio's replacement, Alessandro de Piero, to pick up where the pony-tailed striker left off.

Del Piero, who produced outstanding performances for La Juve last season during Baggio's two-month absence due to a knee injury, is expected to become Baggio's successor also on the Italian national team.

"I liked seeing the 'scudetto' (championship label) back on our jerseys and I would dare ask for an encore," Mr. Agnelli said.

Juventus won its 23rd league title following an eight-year drought.

La Juve will again rely on strikers Gianluca Vialli and Fabrizio Ravanelli and Portuguese midfielder Paulo Sousa, the key players in last season's title race. Juventus initially will have to do without newly signed Italian international Attilio Lombardo, who broke an ankle earlier this month.

Rehearsing for their league duel, AC Milan and Juventus play a much-awaited final of the Luigi Berlusconi trophy



Roberto Baggio's \$19-million move from Juventus to Milan has been the most expensive transfer of the year (AP photo)

at Milan San Siro Stadium Friday night.

While Juventus and Milan are nearly everybody's top choices, they do not have an exclusive hold on the pre-season honours.

UEFA Cup champion Parma, which signed Bulgarian striker Hristo Stoichkov from Barcelona to add to Swedish forward Thomas Broliu and resigned Colombian star Faustino Asprilla, could be a threat.

Parma was impressive in pre-season tournaments in New York and Canada, with Stoichkov and Italian inter-

national Gianfranco Zola producing goals and entertaining play.

Lazio, Roma, Fiorentina and Inter all have the potential to mount a title challenge.

Lazio, tied for second with Parma last season, has retained star winger Giuseppe Signori and Alen Boksic while selling English midfielder Paul Gascoigne to Glasgow Rangers.

Roma improved its offense by adding Italian centre-forward Marco Branca from Parma, adding to its Latin American duo of Daniel Fon-

seca and Abel Balbo.

Fiorentina signed Swedish midfielder Stefan Schwarz to support the scoring Argentine's Gabriel Batistuta. Last season's leading league striker.

Paul Ince moved from Manchester United to Internazionale Milan, ending the Dutch era of Dennis Bergkamp and Wim Jonk.

Other newcomers in the reshuffled Inter lineup include Brazilian defender Roberto Carlos and young Argentine Pascual Sebastian Rambert and Javier Zanetti.

Italian veteran coach Giovanni Trapattoni returns to the Italian league, following one season in Germany with Bayern Munich, to lead Cagliari.

The Sardinian team, which signed Uruguayan Dario Silva to make up for the departure of Panamanian striker Dely Valdez, could be battling for a UEFA Cup berth along with Sampdoria of Genoa.

La Samp sold most of its old guard players — David Platt, Rudi Gullit, Lombardo, Pietro Vierchow and Vladimir Jugovic — to form a young but aggressive team led by newcomers Clarence Seedorf and Christian Karembeu.

Seedorf moved from Ajax Amsterdam after helping the Dutch side to the Champions Cup title over AC Milan. Karembeu is the first player from New Caledonia in the Italian league.

Turkish forward Sukur Hahani lines up with Torino, which sold striker Andrea Silenzi to Nottingham Forest and may find itself struggling in the relegation area along with former giant Napoli and promoted Vicenza, Piacenza, Atlanta of Bergamo and Udinese.

Roma improved its offense by adding Italian centre-forward Marco Branca from Parma, adding to its Latin American duo of Daniel Fon-

8 American gymnasts trying to make Olympics a second time

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — For gymnasts, maybe more than any athlete, competition doesn't last long.

Since 1948, only 12 American women have gone to two Olympics, only three have made it three times. Since 1920, 28 American men have competed twice in the Olympics, two have gone to three, and one, Alfred Jochim, went to four.

Four women and four men at the National Gymnastics Championships are trying to make a second Olympic team roster.

"This is one of the big events, especially this year because everyone is pointing towards the Olympics," John Roethlisberger said. "This is the groundwork."

Roethlisberger, a three-time collegiate and three-time U.S. national all-around champion, was a member of the 1992 Olympic team. He, Trent Dimas, Jai Lynch and Chris Waller are hoping the nationals will be a springboard to Atlanta.

On the women's side, Dominique Dawes, Shannon Miller, Kerri Strug and Kim Zmeskal would like to repeat.

"If you get to go to two Olympics you're lucky. You have to be 15 to be an Olympian," said Strug, who was the youngest member of the team in 1992. "You might make it again at 19, but 23 would be kind of old."

The four-day nationals began today with Miller, a two-time champion, trying to reclaim the all-around title she won in 1992 and 1993. Last year, Miller was second to Dawes in the all-arounds and event finals.

Miller and Dawes have met once this year, in the compulsory routines at the U.S. classic last

month at Hoover, Alabama, where Miller was first and Dawes fourth.

Miller, who won five Olympic medals in Barcelona, has had to learn to cope with her growing body. In Barcelona, Miller was 1.45 metres and weighed 31 kilograms. Now 18, Miller is 1.52 metres and 43 kilograms.

Not only is the flexibility of a 15-year-old gone, maturity also changes the centre of gravity for a female gymnast.

"I'm more focused," said Miller, who won four gold and one silver medal at the Pan American Games this spring. "I know I have a chance to do things in the next year that no one's ever done before."

Karolyi watches up and coming star

Bela Karolyi was a happy man after the first round of the U.S. Gymnastics Championships.

The long-time coach, with a host of former champions to his credit, watched his latest up-and-coming star, 13-year-old Dominique Moceanu, wrap up a solid second in the compulsories in her first event as a senior.

"I'm perfectly satisfied," Karolyi said Wednesday night. "It's a good start in the first competition in her life in the senior division."

Moceanu, of Houston, Texas, scored 46.95 overall. Although Karolyi would not say that he did not want his budding phenomenon to win the women's all-around, he was certain he did not want her to face what another of his students went through in 1992.

That was the year Kim Zmeskal was expected to take the Olympics by storm,

only to end up with only a bronze medal from the team victory.

For nearly a year before the Olympics, Zmeskal was the darling of the media and the fans. Magazines from Time to Sports Illustrated featured her, network television trooped to Houston to interview the 36-kilogram powerhouse who was dubbed the favourite for what may be the most valuable medal of the summer Olympics — the gold in the women's all-around.

It began in September, when Zmeskal won the World Championship in Indianapolis and suddenly found herself a celebrity. Leaving her hotel there, she was surrounded by more than 1,000 shrieking fans clamouring for her attention. For the next 10 months, the cries got louder and the pressure greater.

It was on Mr. Karolyi's mind Wednesday night when he weighed the joy of a possible first-place finish by Moceanu against the pressure it would put on her.

"The last thing I would like to see is the Zmeskal syndrome in '92," Karolyi said. "I don't want too much pressure on her now. She's still having fun out there. That's the way it should be."

The pressure was instead on Shannon Miller.

Miller, who opened on one of her favourite events, the uneven bars, scored a 9.8 to tie Moceanu for second. She moved into the lead after a 9.825 in the floor exercise and stayed there with another 9.825 on the vault to finish with 47.13 points.

"All four events were crucial," Miller's coach, Steve Nunn, said. "It was nip and tuck out there the whole way."

Pierce easily reaches quarterfinals

TORONTO (AP) — France's Mary Pierce humiliated Martina Hingis 6-0, 6-0 Thursday, taking just 40 minutes to dispatch the Swiss teenager and advance to the quarterfinals of the Canadian Open Women's Tennis Championships.

Pierce, the fifth-seeded Australian Open champion,

dominated from the beginning, hammering winners from the baseline. By the second set, Hingis looked grim and appeared like she couldn't wait to get off the court.

In other third-round play Thursday, seventh-seeded German Anke Huber out-

lasted Romanian Irina Spirlea, the 16th seed, 1-6, 6-3, 7-5.

Huber's reward is a quarterfinal date with co-top seed Monica Seles on Friday.

No. 6 Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina looked impressive in defeating Japan's Yone Kamio 6-1, 6-0.

Brazil, Ghana reach Under-17 final

GUAYAQUIL, Ecuador (R) — Brazil hammered arch-rivals Argentina 3-0 on Thursday to reach the final of the world Under-17 Soccer Championship where they will face Ghana, who beat surprise team Oman in the other semi-final.

Ghana's 3-1 win ended a heroic run by the underdogs from Oman, who had previously eliminated Nigeria and held Brazil to a draw in a first round group match. Brazil scored all their goals

in the last 20 minutes after Argentina's top player Cesar La Paglia had been sent off for a second bookable offence in the 65th minute.

The game hinged on the dismissal as Argentina had outclassed their South American neighbours for much of the first half and the early

part of the second but capitulated after La Paglia's departure.

Rodriguez opened the scoring for Brazil in the 73rd minute with an individual goal, while Marcelo Rocha and Fabio do Nascimento both scored in the last three minutes as the Argentine defence capitulated.

Italy's loss is Britain's gain in transfer deals

LONDON (AP) — Ruud Gullit lines up for Chelsea, David Platt and Dennis Bergkamp for Arsenal and Andrea Silenzi is preparing himself for Nottingham Forest.

England's premier league, once the poor relation of Italy in terms of finance, starts up Saturday with the one-time stars of Serie A now playing at Stamford Bridge and Highbury instead of San Siro and the Stadio Della Alpi.

Thanks to huge income from TV, the English clubs now can compete with the Italians in terms of transfer fees and contracts. Although England midfielder Paul Ince has made the reverse journey, moving from Manchester United to Inter Milan, the trend has been the other way with British clubs attracting stars from Italy, France, Portugal and Germany.

Paul Gascoigne has moved from Lazio to Scottish champion Glasgow Rangers. French forward David Ginola has transferred from Paris Saint Germain to Newcastle.

Brazilian star Marques Isias will line up for Coventry after his move from Portugal's Benfica and Belgian midfielder Marc Degryse will play for Sheffield Wednesday.

Aston Villa has signed Serbian striker Savo Milosevic from Partizan Belgrade. Queens Park Rangers has Australian midfielder Ned Zelic from Borussia Dortmund and West Ham will have Dutch striker Marc Boogaers.

In one of the busiest transfer merry-go-rounds in recent years, with some 90 million

pounds (\$144 million) changing hands, there have been plenty of internal moves, too, including the British record transfer of Stan Collymore, who travelled from Forest to Liverpool for 8.5 million pounds (\$13.6 million).

It was that deal that enabled Forest manager Frank Clark to hire Arsenal's Kevin Campbell, Sheffield Wednesday's Chris Bart-Williams and Silenzi, the first Italian international to play for an English club.

A calf muscle injury likely will keep the former Torino striker out of Saturday's game at Southampton, while Saints new manager Dave Merrington has the problem of deciding whether to field Bruce Grobbelaar.

The Zimbabwean goalkeeper is one of three players facing bribery charges after a police investigation into match-fixing allegations. The other players are Wimbledon goalkeeper Hans Segers and Aston Villa striker John Fashanu, both of whom are injured and won't be in action.

Because the English Football Association has taken no immediate action against the players, preferring to let the court proceedings run their course, all three are free to continue playing. They are due to appear in court in October.

That is also the month when Eric Cantona makes his return to competitive soccer. Back in February, the talented French striker was suspended until the end of September over his Kung-Fu attack on a Crystal Palace fan after he was sent off in a

league game at Selhurst Park. Without Cantona, Manchester United's league and cup form nosedived and the Reds ended the season without a trophy, a year after they had won both.

Cantona, who served 120 hours of community service for the assault, demanded a transfer last week — only to be convinced to stay at Old Trafford by manager Alex Ferguson.

United, which sold Ince to Inter, Mark Hughes to Chelsea and is trying to finalise the sale of Andrei Kanchelskis to Everton or even Arsenal, starts its campaign at Villa, which is being

reshaped under Brian Little.

Defending titlist Blackburn, one of the busiest clubs last year in the transfer market, has been much quieter this time, with Ray Harford replacing Kenny Dalglish as team manager. Dalglish, who led Rovers to their first league title for 81 years, has been moved upstairs as director of soccer at the club.

Rovers start the defence of the title against a Queens Park Rangers team that may struggle now that it no longer has striker Les Ferdinand.

The England forward has moved on to ambitious, big-spending Newcastle, which also has hired Ginola and

Wimbledon's Warren Barton.

"I get a bit annoyed that we're now referred to as moneybags Newcastle," said manager Kevin Keegan, who took over at a time when the club was financially sick and led it to promotion from division one and to sixth in the standings last season.

"We have earned the right to be moneybags United. The staff and players deserve that right because we have put on a brand of football that's attracted full houses before a ball is kicked."

Newcastle hosts Coventry, whose manager Ron Atkinson has had a clearout of five players including striker Roy Wegerle, who now is in the United States and unlikely to return. Among their replacements are English midfielder John Salako and Benfica forward Isias.

Gullit, moving to English soccer as a sweeper after several seasons in Italy as a creative forward, will line up against FA Cup holder Everton.

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se it attracts very fast. When we go climbing we really minimise the risks we thought it was that we wouldn't go climb she said. "Anybody went off thinking that was a very high chance couldn't come back. It's very unfair thing to do with a young family."

only other British to have stood on the top of K-2 was Julie Tait in 1986, but she did not descend. The descent has been rehearsing this all day for nearly 10 years. Mr. Ballard told BBC. He said he was planning to tell Tom, 6 and Kate, their mother might not be coming back.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli positions under fire in Lebanon

MARJAYOUN (AFP) — Hizbollah guerrillas attacked positions of the Israeli army and its proxy militia in South Lebanon early Friday without causing casualties, the South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia said. The guerrillas fired rocket propelled grenades and machine gun fire at the Israeli outpost of Dabsh and shelled the SLA position at Kfarreman. About two hours later the Sojod outpost, where both Israeli and SLA forces are deployed, also came under fire. Hizbollah claimed the attacks in a statement released in Beirut. The pro-Iranian guerrillas "scored direct hits on the Dabsh position and a fire broke out," a spokesman said.

No quick solution to dispute with Iran — UAE

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) ruled out on Friday a quick solution to its dispute with Tehran over three Gulf islands occupied by Iran. "It's a thorny question and all signs out of Tehran suggest that a solution is not near" for the dispute over the Abu Musa, Lesser Tunb and Greater Tunb islands, Sheikh Sultan Ben Zayed Al Nahyan, the deputy prime minister, said. The UAE "continues its dialogue and diplomatic activities with Iran to try to modify its outlook on this matter," he said, adding that Tehran's occupation of the strategic islands was "un-Islamic." Sheikh Sultan said the UAE would be forced to take the dispute to the United Nations and other international bodies "to regain its legitimate rights over the islands." The UAE asked Iran in October to accept arbitration by the International Court of Justice at The Hague. Tehran implicitly rejected the demand, saying the islands "belonged to it for eternity."

Swedish prime minister to resign

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson announced Friday that he will resign as Swedish premier and leader of the Social Democratic Party next year, saying he had succeeded in leading Sweden out of a deep crisis. Mr. Carlsson, 60, will step down as party leader during its congress to be held March 15-20 of next year and would "immediately afterwards" hand in his resignation as prime minister to the speaker of parliament, Birgitta Dahl. Mr. Carlsson would not comment on who he thought would succeed him as the head of the party and government, leaving the choice up to the ruling Social Democratic Party. In power from 1986 to 1991 and again since legislative elections in September 1994, Mr. Carlsson has headed the Social Democratic Party since the assassination of Social Democratic Prime Minister Olof Palme in February 1986. "At the extraordinary congress in 1996, we will leave behind us a period of difficult, but necessary and ultimately successful, decisions. This will be a good time for a new leader to take charge of the Social Democratic party, ahead of the 21st century," Mr. Carlsson said. Summarising his actions as party leader and premier since the party's return to power in September 1994, he recalled his success at bringing Sweden into the European Union in January 1995 and of "having had the strength to take the difficult responsibility" for decisions "necessary" to set the country's economy straight.

Drug traffickers, forgers bust in Lebanon

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese police have arrested drug traffickers and smashed a counterfeiting ring in a drive to crush organised crime, officials and the press reported on Friday. Well-informed sources linked the crackdown to reports that Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon, has lifted its protection of certain Lebanese businessmen in an effort to help Interpol and the Beirut authorities to eradicate crime. A man identified as the leader of a multi-million drug trafficking operation and three women were arrested separately and their testimony led a judge to issue warrants for 15 other people on the run, they said. The four testified they had managed to smuggle 45 kilograms of heroin from Lebanon to the United States, Canada and Europe over the past two years, according to the respected Al Nahar daily quoting unnamed security sources. The women were used as couriers. They swallowed capsules of heroin concealed in surgical gloves and received between \$10,000 and \$25,000 for each run depending on the amount they carried, the report said. A judge also issued several arrest warrants for suspected counterfeiters who are believed to have distributed around \$25 million in fake notes and one million forged marks in the Middle East and Europe, the report said.

Algeria announces Nov. 16 as date for election

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algeria on Friday announced Nov. 16 as the date for presidential voting rejected by the Opposition and by outlawed Islamic fundamentalists waging war against the government. President Liamine Zouero proposed the date to Algerian political parties and leaders who support the election under the terms set by the government, and they accepted it, presidential spokesman Mihoub Mihoubi told the state-run news agency APS. The banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and the main legal opposition parties have rejected the terms set by the government for the voting. Algeria has been torn by violence since the army stepped in to cancel January 1992 elections that the FIS was poised to win. The war has claimed an estimated 30,000 lives.

4 Sudan rebels executed by SPLA

KAMPALA (R) — Sudanese rebels executed four of their men by firing squad for killing two Ugandans who had allegedly failed to pay for weapons, witnesses said on Friday. They told Reuters the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) executed four rebel privates late last month in South Sudan at Paga, eight km (five miles) north of the border with Uganda. Six northern Ugandan leaders were taken to witness the killings. The northern Ugandan leaders told Reuters the four SPLA fighters had regularly sold AK-47 assault rifles to the two Ugandans, who sold them on to the cattle-raising Karamojong tribe. But the two Ugandans were murdered after they said they could not pay for one set of weapons as they had been stolen.

Engine blast behind U.S. 'copter crash

NICOSIA (AP) — Investigators are checking reports that an engine explosion may have caused the crash of a U.S. military helicopter earlier this week, a U.S. diplomat said Friday. "It is not clear yet what caused the crash but indications are it was an accident," said Alejandro Wolff, a U.S. embassy charge d'affaires. "A report that the crash was preceded by an explosion in one of the engines is also being investigated," Mr. Wolff said. Cyprus police patrol boats continued searching Friday for the four U.S. airmen, who have been missing since their Black Hawk helicopter crashed about five kilometres south of the fishing port of Ziyi. Mr. Wolff said a U.S. navy salvage vessel was due off Ziyi to try to recover the main wreckage of the helicopter, which is at a depth of about 20 metres.

Over 70 killed in Morocco flash floods

RABAT (AFP) — Flash flooding triggered by heavy rains has killed at least 73 people in southern Morocco, officials said. The Marrakesh area was whipped overnight by violent storms which came after months of severe drought. Heavy loss of life and material damage were registered in the village of St Fadma, Ourika, Moulay Ibrahim, Ourigane and Zerkten, officials said. Authorities went to the scene of the disaster to provide aid to the beleaguered population and King Hassan II gave orders for relief material to be sent to the area.



A police patrol check the identity papers of a man on the Champs-Elysees in Paris following a bomb explosion, the second in the French capital in a month (AFP photo)

Second Paris blast in one month raises French fear

PARIS (Agencies) — As police maintained a huge security presence in the French capital on Friday, following the second bomb in the city centre in three weeks, authorities admitted they had few leads to go on. "At this point in the investigation, nothing allows us to conclude that the same people are responsible for both attacks," a police spokesman said.

One thing, however, was clear, police said: The bomb was intended to kill.

The rush-hour blast sprayed 12-centimetre nails and hex nuts into a crowded street in the tourist heart of Paris injuring 17 people, ten of them foreign visitors.

It was the same kind as the one that exploded in a subway station in the crowded Latin quarter last month, killing seven and injuring 84.

A total of 1,200 mobile security officers were placed at strategic points round the city and another 16,000 uniformed officers ensured a strong police presence in public areas, in subways and railway stations.

The mayor of Paris appealed to Parisians to stay calm.

Speaking on French Radio Mayor Jean Tiberi said Parisians should "remain vigilant" and "not fall into the trap of provocation and fear."

"No-one can say if we are in the middle of a series of attacks," even if "we may always fear that," Mr. Tiberi said.

He praised the French and the tourists for conducting themselves with "calmness and serenity" both after the explosion in a subway station and after Thursday's blast.

Nine people were still receiving hospital treatment after Thursday's blast, authorities said.

Three were in a serious condition. An eight-year-old Italian boy had first and second degree burns to an arm and may have suffered lung damage from the blast, hospital authorities said. A 60-year-old British woman, Patricia Hudson, was being treated for shrapnel wounds to her legs, according to British press, and a 23-year-old Portuguese man was also badly hurt, the hospital said.

An Italian woman and her three-year-old child, four members of a Hungarian family had received lesser injuries.

Crowds of curious tourists and Parisians gathered at the bomb site on Avenue Friedland, a stone's throw from the famed Champs-Elysees, on Friday morning. Some took photographs of three iron bolts in the ground — all that remained of the gold-topped garbage can where the bomb was hidden.

"People were here from 6.30 a.m. when we opened," said the salesman at the newspaper kiosk just metres from the blast.

A postcard stand positioned at the side of the kiosk nearest the garbage can protected them from injury, his female colleague said, still in shock from the attack.

Several witnesses, most of them foreign tourists, offered their amateur video film to the authorities but none was able to throw light on any suspects, police said.

Among new security measures introduced Friday morning, police cordoned off the pavement outside the Elysee presidential palace of Jacques Chirac, only opened to the public last month as part of the new head of state's drive for openness.

Litter bins had already been sealed up in all metro stations since the Saint Michel subway attack, but those above ground have so far remained unaffected. It was not clear what other measures would be announced following the new blast.

Analysts were united in naming Algerian fundamentalist militants as the number one suspect to have carried out both attacks.

The murderous July 25 explosion at the Saint Michel metro station also injured more than 80 people.

Palestinian police clash with Hamas

GAZA (Agencies) — Palestinian police engaged in a gun battle with militants Friday during an attempt to arrest a fugitive gunman, witnesses said.

Some 200 policemen armed with assault rifles surrounded a house in Gaza City's Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood Friday afternoon and tried to detain Ibrahim Nafar, a member of the Izzeddin Al Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of the militant group Hamas.

A firefight ensued, but police failed to take Nafar. It was not immediately clear whether anyone was hurt.

Palestinian police have been hunting for four Islamic militants suspected of planning a suicide attack in Israel. The Gaza Strip has been sealed by Israel for more than a week to prevent a suicide bomber from entering Israel.

"We are working all the time to halt the suicide bombers who want to carry out attacks against Israel and we arrested one on Tuesday," said a police official who refused to be named.

"We are still searching for another suspect," he added. The man held, who was not named, was among four detained this week following a tip-off that Hamas was planning to blow up a car packed with explosives in the heart of Tel Aviv.

The second suspect has been identified as Wael Nassar, 23, a Hamas member from Gaza City. He has gone into hiding.

Palestinian security services last week alerted Israel, which has faced a wave of suicide bombings in the last 18 months that have killed dozens of people.

As a preventive measure, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin decided to seal off the Gaza Strip from Israel on Aug. 10 and to review the situation daily.

The closure, which stops 16,800 Gazans from working in Israel, is set to remain in force until at least dawn Sunday.

The Palestinian National Authority has demanded that the closure be lifted.

Earlier Friday, Hamas followers burned American and Israeli flags to protest against the detention of the group's political leader, Musa Abu Marzouk, in the United States.

Hamas reiterated warnings that the United States and Israel will "pay dearly" if Mr. Abu Marzouk is extradited to Israel.

The warning came in a leaflet handed out to hundreds of worshippers at Hamas-controlled mosques in the Gaza Strip. Hamas activists burned Israeli and U.S. flags.

"It's no secret that the (Bill) Clinton administration has become a Zionist tool...it's only worry is to carry out Israel's orders," said the Hamas leaflet.

"The American people should know that the continued detention of...Abu Marzouk or his extradition to Israel will turn the American people into a scapegoat."

Mr. Abu Marzouk was arrested at New York's Kennedy international airport on July 25. U.S. immigration inspectors said his name had recently been added to a list of suspected "terrorists."

Israel put out a warrant for his arrest, contending that Mr. Abu Marzouk ordered attacks on Israeli citizens and soldiers and sent money to Hamas activists in the West Bank and Gaza for buying weapons.

The U.S. government has begun extradition proceedings against Mr. Abu Marzouk.

At the Salaheddin Mosque in Gaza City, worshippers cheered as U.S. and Israeli flags went up in flames.

Cairo newspapers demand retribution for PoW killings

CAIRO (AP) — In their first reaction to Israeli killing of Egyptian prisoners of war (PoWs), opposition newspapers on Friday urged retribution against the killers and criticised the government for not taking a tougher stand on the issue.

Al Ahram, the weekly newspaper of the Liberal Party, proposed expelling Israeli Ambassador David Sultan, and the daily Al Wafd urged trying those accused of the killings and refusing visits to Egypt by Israel's prime minister.

"It is our right as Egyptians to call for banning prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin from Egypt and cut all contacts with him no matter what the price," Managing Editor Abbas Al Tarabily wrote in the newspaper of the Wafd Party.

In a column, Mr. Tarabily referred to Israel's demand for revenge for the killing of Jews, especially anyone who took part in the Holocaust in World War II.

"If Israel chases whoever killed a Jew, so what are we going to do to those who

killed thousands of Egyptian PoWs?" he asked.

The scandal over the killing of Egyptian prisoners of war began two weeks ago when retired Israel General Arye Biro admitted he ordered 49 of them executed during the 1956 Mideast war.

Other reports of the summary executions of Egyptian PoWs have since surfaced in Israel, and some Israeli historians have said thousands of Egyptian prisoners may have been killed in Mideast wars in what amounted to an unofficial Israeli policy.

The editor of Al Ahram, Mustafa Bakri, criticised the government's quiet handling of the issue.

"The least we can do is to expel the Israeli spy who is considered an ambassador and to try those war criminals and demand retribution," he wrote. "The blood of those martyrs is haunting us... It would be a shame if we didn't take revenge from the blood-suckers."

The Egyptian government asked for an investigation of the reports of the 49 deaths.

Congress Party says it welcomes Gandhi heir

NEW DELHI (R) — India's ruling Congress Party said Friday it would embrace Rahul Gandhi, son of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, if he decided to join politics.

"The decision is up to him, but if he joins, we will welcome him," Congress spokesman Vithal Gadgil told Reuters.

Rahul Gandhi recently turned 25, the minimum age to run for electoral office under Indian laws. He is scheduled to make a public appearance next week at Amethi, the constituency of his father.

The planned visit triggered media speculation that he was setting the ground for an entry into politics as the next generation of the Nehru dynasty, which gave independent India its first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.

His daughter, Indira Gandhi, was prime minister for all but two years from 1966 to 1984, when she was assassinated by Sikh bodyguards shortly after she ordered an army operation to flush separatist militants from Sikhdom's holiest temple.

After she was killed, her son, Rajiv, took over. While campaigning to regain power for the Congress Party, he

was assassinated in 1991 by suspected Sri Lankan Tamil separatists. When prime minister, Rajiv had sent Indian troops to fight the rebels in Sri Lanka.

The Nehru-Gandhi family's charisma has cemented the fractious Congress Party which has ruled India for most of the 48 years since freedom from British rule in 1947.

The disputes within a party that spans wide shades of opinion have grown considerably worse in the past year. A breakaway faction has been pressing Sonia Gandhi, Rajiv's Italian-born widow, and her family to take an active interest in Congress Party politics.

The group, led by former cabinet minister Arjun Singh, has accused Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao of ignoring the Gandhi family's political legacy.

Some Congress members were quick to press Sonia Gandhi to take over the party leadership after her husband's death, but she turned down the offer.

Petroleum Minister Satish Sharma, a close friend of the Gandhis, recently offered to vacate the Amethi seat he represents after Rajiv's death in favour of the Gandhis.

COLUMN

Prince Andrew angered by Fergie snub — paper

LONDON (R) — Britain's Prince Andrew is angry that his estranged wife Sarah Ferguson has been barred from all VJ day events marking the 50th anniversary of victory over Japan, a newspaper said on Friday. Queen Elizabeth will be joined by other members of the royal family, including Princess Diana, for the events but Prince Andrew's estranged wife has not been included. "The prince feels slighted that she has been treated this way," the Daily Mirror quoted a friend as saying. "Previously he has asked for the duchess to be included in royal gatherings paying tribute at events like the VE weekend of celebrations but has been over-ruled." Prince Andrew has been on holiday with his wife, popularly known as "Fergie," and their two young daughters in Spain, sparking speculation in the British press that they could be heading for a reconciliation. Unlike Prince Charles and his estranged wife, Princess Diana, Prince Andrew and his wife have remained on good terms since their separation.

Woman stabs sailor after watching 'Basic Instinct'

PORTSMOUTH, England (AFP) — A depressed British housewife took a knife and went out looking for a stranger to stab after watching the film "Basic Instinct" in which a woman kills a string of lovers, a court heard here Thursday. Vanessa Ballantyne went to a nightclub, picked up the first person she met there, and led him down a dark alley. There she told John Parr, a sailor: "I've got something for you," before plunging a 13 centimetre knife into his stomach.

"Basic Instinct," which stars Sharon Stone, opens with a scene in which a man is stabbed to death with an ice pick by a woman he is having sex with. Mr. Parr, an Able Seaman who is in his 30s, was later admitted to hospital where he received treatment for the wound. A week after the incident Ms. Ballantyne contacted the police and confessed to the stabbing. The court heard that she had been suffering from psychotic depression at the time of the incident. Judge Michael McGee committed Ms. Ballantyne to hospital under the Mental Health Act, telling her that but for the fact she was suffering from a severe mental illness at the time of the stabbing, she would have imposed a long prison sentence.

Younger smokers 5 times more likely to have heart attack

LONDON (AFP) — Smokers in their 30s and 40s have five times as many heart attacks as non-smokers, according to the largest study of heart attack survivors yet carried out in Britain, the results of which were published Friday. The study, published in the British Medical Journal, also shows that smoking low or medium tar cigarettes did little to diminish the risk of a heart attack. More than 10,000 hospital patients who had suffered heart attacks were questioned about their smoking habits. Smokers in their 70s had twice as many heart attacks as non-smokers, the study found, and among smokers in their 50s heart attacks were three times as common. But there were five times as many smokers in their 30s and 40s who had heart attacks as non-smokers. Until now doctors had believed smokers in this age group faced a three-fold greater risk, the report said. The researchers found a very slight difference in the incidence of heart attacks between those who smoked low tar as opposed to medium tar brands, but they believe the difference is not sufficient to say the lower brands are safer. Dr. Rory Collins, a senior research fellow at Oxford University who helped organise the study, said an estimated 20,000 people under the age of 50 suffered heart attacks in Britain each year. But he added that for people who give up smoking, the risks drop away very rapidly. In five years you are some way back towards the risk level of a non-smoker.

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